Le Minotaur

Volume Seventeen

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Cover picture: *David Slews Goliath*, by Henry Fuseli

If you have a submission for the **Le Minotaur** feel free to contact the magazine.

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"Modern dating is in desperate need of blunt honesty. Being upfront, firm but polite shows that you know what you want and are unwilling to waste your time and a potential partner's time."

Emma Hathorn

Le Minotaur

Le Minotaur Press of Vancouver is delighted to publish the Seventeenth edition of ***Le Minotaur*** Magazine which serves to explore the beast in all of us.

In this edition there are several short stories that also explore the beastliness of artistry and artists. A hearty welcome to first time submitters. A thank to returning submitters.

You might enjoy what rats are up to in Cambodia. Not all rats are bad!

Please feel free to submit your short stories, prose, poetry and artwork to

penny_plenty321 @ yahoo.com

There is no fee to submit. There is no writer's fee provided by the journal for those who submit. The publishing rights remain with the author.

Le Minotaur welcomes submissions on a quarterly basis.

Artwork

Something Very Erotic by Veronica

[**London, UK**] For this Valentine's Day I thought I might have some fun. A few days before I dropped in to a Photography Studio operated by some women friends and sat for a very erotic Valentine's Day gift for my boyfriend.

We had been seeing each other for two years but we had yet to share a bed. I am Catholic and believe we should wait until we are married. On Valentine's Evening under a near full moon, he got down onto a knee and proposed to me.

We are getting married this summer. Justifiably, I will be wearing white.

The Many Adventures of Perseus … P. Corbett

[**London, UK**] Long ago in Greece there lived a king called Acrisius who had just one daughter, a beautiful girl named Danaë. But Acrisius had a streak of jealousy that ran through his soul and tainted everything that he touched.

He could not stand to see anyone go near his daughter and, most of all, he could not bear the idea that someone might take her from him. She would marry no one!

So, in the dead of night, he summoned his blacksmith. The poor man trembled as he was dragged before the king. There in the darkness of the great hall with the rush lights flickering, casting dark shadows on the walls, Acrisius ordered him to build a huge chamber of bronze.

Day by day the blacksmith laboured in secret, building a chamber the size of a large bedroom. In the roof was a tiny window that let in a little daylight. When the room was finished, Acrisius locked Danaë and her old nanny inside.

He ordered the blacksmith to seal the chamber leaving only a small hole in the door through which food and water could be passed.

So it was that the years ran by until finally the great god Zeus saw Danaë through the tiny window in the roof. That night Danaë woke to hear the sound of rain. As she opened her eyes, she was amazed to see droplets of golden light shimmering through the window. She stood under the shower of gold and felt a shudder of Zeus power pass through her.

Danaë impregnated by Zeus, Titian 1544

Now, it was nine months later that Danaë gave birth to Perseus. For several years she managed to keep the secret from her father with the help of her nanny. But one day Acrisius was walking in the courtyard. He stopped at the chamber and felt its smooth, burnished sides and tried to remember what his daughter looked like. It was at that moment that he heard a child laughing from inside. Enraged, he ordered his guards to unseal the chamber. Danaë, the nanny and young Perseus stumbled out into the daylight, blinking like owls.

Acrisius ordered the poor nanny to be executed. Before her blood had run dry, a large chest had been made. Danaë and Perseus were squeezed into the chest, the lid nailed down and it was thrown into the sea. Acrisius stood on the beach

and watched as it bobbed further and further into the distance. Knowing that he had sent his own flesh and blood to their doom, he stood staring until the sun set. But the chest was tugged by powers stronger than a king's hatred and it drifted towards the island of Seriphus.

Danaë and Perseus on Seriphos, Henry Fuseli, 1785

Dictys the fisherman would never be rich, but he was a kind man. Every day he went down to the rocks where he cast out his nets and dragged them back in, hoping for a silvery catch. Now, on this morning, when he began to pull in the net he had to call to the other fishermen, for there was something trapped.

It was not a dolphin as they suspected at first but a huge chest. They dragged it onto the beach and before Dictys had a chance to force it open, the lid moved

of its own accord. To his amazement, out stepped a beautiful young woman and her toddler – Danaë and Perseus.

And because he was a good man, Dictys took them into his humble home. Danaë did not once think of the palace that she had known, for Dictys gave her freedom, the sunlight and the beautiful sea. Now the years ran by happily until the king of the island, Polydectes, fell in love with Danaë, almost as if he could not help himself. He wanted to marry her.

But Perseus, who now stood tall, declared: "No man may marry my mother without my word, for I am her only male relative." The two argued and Polydectes taunted Perseus. Enraged, Perseus swore by Zeus that he would provide a wedding gift for Polydectes, a terrible gift – *the head of the Medusa*. Terrible because with just one glance, she could turn any living creature to stone!

No sooner had the words been spoken than Perseus regretted what he had said. But it was too late. He had sworn by Zeus and now that could not be changed. That evening, Perseus stood by the sea, staring out at the waves and wondering how he could ever find and capture the Medusa's head. He knew that Medusa lived with her sisters, the Gorgons. And only the three one-eyed witches knew where she lived.

As he was wondering how he would find the one-eyed witches, he heard a noise behind him. There was the goddess Athena, who gave him a sword that would slice through any metal, and a shield polished until it shone like a mirror. But more than that, for Hermes the god of trickery had stolen a cape

of invisibility, a pair of winged sandals so that Perseus could fly, and a sack to conceal the Medusa's gory gaze. Then Hermes whispered to Perseus an idea, a little seed of an idea that soon took root.

Perseus and the head of Medusa, Florence

On winged sandals Perseus flew to the one-eyed witches' lair. Ancient as time, wrinkled and stooped like three ragged crows, they sat, muttering and cackling. Perseus stood between them. They sensed his presence but could not see him because their eye sockets were empty.

"Now tell me, fair lady, where is Medusa's den?" Within seconds the hags began to quarrel about which one was the fair lady. To solve the question, one of them produced an eye – the eye they shared. She was about to put it into

her empty eye socket when Perseus grabbed it. He said: "Tell me where Medusa lives – or I'll throw this bright bauble to the seagulls." It stared up at him, almost knowingly. He shuddered and closed his fist around its jelly.

Perseus and the head of Medusa, Cellini, circa 1550

Sooner rather than later, Perseus had his answer and was flying across dark rocks until he came to the mouth of the cave where the Gorgons slept. Their leathery wings were folded but their hair writhed in a knot of serpents. He

drew his sword but was uncertain which was Medusa. Then he noticed that by one Gorgon, tiny mice had been frozen into stone. It had to be Medusa!

He took his sword and crept closer. Using the shield as a mirror, he avoided her icy stare. With a scream and one blow, he sliced off her head and scooped it into the sack. Wearing his cape of invisibility, he crouched in the shadows as the sisters searched the cave.

He took his sword and crept closer. Using the shield as a mirror, he avoided her icy stare. With a scream and one blow, he sliced off her head and scooped it into the sack. Wearing his cape of invisibility, he crouched in the shadows as the sisters searched the cave.

Once they had left, Perseus noticed that out of Medusa's foul body a tiny winged horse struggled. It flew round the cave, casting white light. And it grew. There was no time to lose. Perseus mounted Pegasus and they set off, back to Polydectes' castle. For at that very moment, the wedding guests were arriving. Danaë was about to be forced into marriage!

As they flew over the sea, Perseus saw below a beautiful girl chained to a rock. It was Andromeda about to be sacrificed to a sea monster. Pegasus dived down and his shadow on the sea confused the monster. It took only one blow and the sea monster died. Taking Andromeda with him, Perseus wished to fly on for he knew that little time was left. But Andromeda's father Phineas had other plans and summoned Perseus to his banqueting hall.

Perseus hid the Medusa's head in his leather bag and strode into the great hall. As soon as Perseus was inside the room, Phineas called to his men. Surrounded by spears, swords and shields, Perseus stood quite still. The archers drew back their bowstrings, men raised their spears ready to strike down Perseus.

But as Phineas roared his command, Perseus tugged the Medusa's head from the bag. He turned to look away from its dreadful stare but all those around him were transfixed. At first their limbs seemed to harden, their bones ached and then gradually as their skin turned grey, their minds froze, trapping them in eternity. Like great marble statues, the warriors tumbled.

Now, you may wonder why Andromeda was not angry with Perseus, but the answer is simple enough. It had been her own parents who had tried to sacrifice her to the monster so there was little love between them. But even she shuddered at the sight of so many cold bodies, already hard as rock. Perseus did not waste time in summoning Pegasus and soon he was riding with Andromeda across the sea.

The time seemed to crawl by as the ocean and landscape swept under Pegasus' shadow but, in the end, they landed inside the castle walls. There poor Dictys wept, for Danaë was about to be forced to marry Polydectes. But Perseus strode into the banquet. "So, where is your gift?" sneered Polydectes.

"Here!" roared Perseus. Everyone turned to stare and, like a great magician, Perseus tugged Medusa's head out of the sack.

Only Danaë did not look, for she was ashamed of what had been about to happen. But everyone else was curious and in one moment their curiosity froze them, their limbs crystallising to stone.

And Perseus strode up to Polydectes, took his crown from the statue's head and marched outside. There in front of the townsfolk, under the midday sun, he placed the crown upon Dictys' head and pronounced him their fisher king.

Pictorial: The Ultimate Bra … She makes her Point!

Is a Pictorial better in B/W or in Colour? By William Webster

[**New York**] With modern apps you can take a Black and White picture and render it in colour. Is a Pictorial better in Black and White or in colour?

Perhaps it depends on the pictorial? Take for example this B/W picture of a girl holding a ball:

You can use an app such as *ImageColorize* to render this B/W pictorial as a colour photograph. When you do this, this is what results ...

This particular pictorial suddenly comes alive. The colour of the red ball in the foreground draws you in in a fashion that was not done in the Black and White original. Her flesh tone also attracts you interest. She becomes more real …

Here is another example. This is a B/W piece titled the *Allegory of the Apple*:

When it is colorized the piece takes on a vibrant meaning …

Let me ask you … what does the wicker basket remind you of?

Here is a third example, a woman hiding behind a broad leafed plant:

Here is a colourized rendering of her:

Isn’t she beautiful! The colourful leaf represents a double entendre …

Here is *A Woman with her Nest* in black and white

And now in colour … which do you prefer?

Here are some more pictorials for comparisons …

I did not know the woman’s actual hair colour so I just guessed …

I thought she might be a strawberry blonde … do you agree with me?

Here are some vintage pictorials from the UK in the 1960's …

And now colourized …

Here is the same model standing up in her shower …

What colour should the tiles be? We know what colour she shall be …

If you said light blue … here's to you! With colour she comes alive …

Would it surprise you to know that this sort of pictorial was just at the hairy edge of what the censors would allow in public print in just fifty years ago.

Can you guess why? Let me give you a clue …

The next pictorial is from a 1922 edition of Shadowlands Magazine …

She is nude but from the side. And here it is colourized …

If she were alive today this ballerina would be at least 120 years old … In this pictorial she is ageless.

Oh why is it that we must age. Why can we not stay young forever?

Call for Minotaur Art

Le Minotaur Magazine invites our readers to send in their original Minotaur Art, to be featured on the cover or within our Magazine.

Send your submissions as either jpeg or as pdf and include an artist's statement of perhaps 200 words.

Prose

Consortia by Patrick Bruskiewich

He was a creature of habit, some good habits and some bad.

During the week, like clockwork every afternoon at two, he ventured down to take a break at the coffee shop just around the corner from his luxurious apartment. He could just make himself a coffee and stay in but the coffee shop had a fancy Italian espresso machine and well, he loved a good cup of espresso coffee. Sometimes when he is traveling in Europe he brings back a few bags of Italian Abyssinian coffee and leaves it here for his own use.

Being a musician he loved the musical gurgle and whistle of the machine. Its sound seemed as calming to him as the coffee itself.

He also liked to relax by reading the international dailies that were here for the patrons: the *London Times*, the *New York Times*, *Le Monde*, and a half-dozen European newspapers in German, Spanish and Italian. There were also a number of the local Shanghai broadsheets, which he rarely looked at. He hoped no one noticed this …

The coffee shop once played background music, but soon after a new chandelier with spokes was hung from the ceiling, he noticed the music was no more. It did not take him long to realize that the spokes were pointed at the different tables. He assumed then that they were directional microphones. Talk about *Big Brother* …

The coffee shop only allowed an elite clientele. There was a PLA soldier guarding the door, imperiously checking membership cards. This directive was set in place during the Covid-epidemic of 2019-2024. People like him were kept safe behind the barriers controlling how the general population could venture forth and interact with the elite.

Occasionally here in the coffee shop he saw either the elites themselves, or their sons and daughters. He found it odd there were never any of their wives to be seen. Almost as if they could not be trusted, the wives would only come with their husbands. Their daughters had more freedom.

During each visit he took his time to glance at several of the international newspapers since he understood several languages. Reading the newspapers gave him the chance to practice his comprehension. Some of the articles had been censured by the state. Someone had taken a black marker to them. He didn't mind that for he was not interested in politics. He never read the first few sections of the foreign newspapers. He was not interested in what was going on in the world. It was all bad news anyway. He was only interested in music, art and culture.

Occasionally there was a news article about him in one of the international dailies. Today there was a short article about him in a German newspaper about a recent piano recital he had given in Berlin. The Berlin recital was the last of eight he performed during his most recent tour of Europe. He read the story, sneered, and then turned to the next page of the *Arts & Culture* section of *Die Welt*. The Germans only really said good things about Germans. They could never bring themselves to say anything nice about non-Germans like

him. He would always read the German newspapers last. For him German was his least favorite of his languages, for it was not as musical and romantic as French, Italian and Spanish.

He enjoyed the French and Italian languages. When he was in his twenties he had spent several years studying the piano at *Conservatoires* in both Paris and Rome. Now he was a decade older and had already began to wax nostalgically at how simple his life was while a student at the European *Conservatoires*, before he started to perform on stage in front of live audiences. He had given his first performance at twenty-two.

Now his life was now a rather boring set routine. Practice … Perform … Practice … Perform. He spent so much of his time practicing that sometimes it was hard for him not to see himself as nothing more than a fancifully trained monkey.

He stood up and returned the newspapers to their stand. He stretched then sat down again at his table. He sat at the same table every time he came for coffee. They knew to set a *Reserved* sign on his small round table. Normally the small round table would seat two chairs. But when it was *Reserved* for him, they took away the second chair. This guarded his privacy and solitude.

He looked surreptitiously around him to see if anyone was looking. As usual, he sat with his back to the one and only surveillance camera in the coffee shop. The coast appeared clear and so he lifted the old pocket book out of his jacket pocket and opened it to Chapter 20 *Time Pussy*. He had covered the book cover with a plain wrap of white paper, so the book appeared rather innocuous.

It was his secret passion, something which he had discovered on a rare afternoon off in New York on his first visit to the Big Apple. He fed his appetite by smuggling home to Shanghai second hand science fiction books, such as anthologies by his favorite author Isaac Asimov. Now he feeds his appetite at second hand book shops in all the major cities he performs in. Today he was enjoying Book Two of *The Early Asimov*. He had tried to read pdf versions of the books but it tired his eyes. He had also tried the 'read aloud' app in Adobe but it just didn't fill him with the enjoyment of holding a real book in his hands, and he letting his eyes read something other than the lined notes of a musical score.

Just a few years before the authorities in Beijing had prohibited the reading of science fiction and in particular the Sci Fi classics by authors like Asimov. The authorities wanted to take full possession of the future by banning any science fiction stories that might foresee the future. That way anything 'invented' by the authorities would shine their patina, and not that of any other person, least of all a foreigner. It wasn't just that Asimov was America, it was also that he was of Russian descent. Asimov had three strikes against him, he was farsighted, and his duel cultural heritage thrown in.

Then there was the *Gibson Edict* from a few years ago. William Gibson's book Neuromancer was banned by the state, as were all of his other books. They had put out a List of Books and Gibson was near the top of the list. Gibson was a known Japanophile, and an advocate of *Cyberpunk*. China and Japan were in a declared economic war going back decades. Besides,

Cyberpunk was a form of rebellion against authority and against technology. Big Brother didn't like that.

For the past few decades, since the Sci Fi novel *The Three Body Problem* became so popular, only Chinese Science Fiction, displaying the right patina was allowed. He had read *the book* ... but to be perfectly honest, it had put him to sleep. It was not very well written and the plot seemed hardly plausible. Whenever someone mentioned *The Three Body Problem* to him he would smirk … then try to change the subject. He felt, even with his limited writing skills, he could write a better Sci Fi novel. But then that would be a waste of his valuable time, wouldn't it?

He stuck to his Asimov. He did not know how they found out, but he had been asked by some of his friends and acquaintances … and fought the urge to smuggle Sci Fi books in for them. The Great Fire Wall blocked them direct access to the classics. If he was caught possessing the prohibited books that was one thing. The authorities might slap his wrists and tell him to stop. On the other hand if he smuggled books in for them, well, they might take away his passport and perhaps even throw him in prison for a spell just to remind him … *who is boss* … when it comes to individual thought. Big Brother didn't want you to think for yourself.

He had been so enthralled in Asimov's story *Time Pussy* that he hadn't noticed her until she stood right beside him. He first noticed her shoes. Her shoes were not *bling-bling*, but were well crafted and so he knew she was not from around here. He followed up the leg attached to the foot in the shoe. She wore pink silk stockings and a fashionable pink skirt, topped by a simple soft

pink sweater. She had a small fashionable handbag draped over her shoulder, and wore pearl earrings and a pearl necklace. He knew she was too chic to be from around here.

She was unmistakeably nervous. She had approached him and said hello in Mandarin, but with an interesting edge to it. He smiled at her. He knew that not just anyone could enter and drink coffee at this place. You had to be a member of the *Shanghai Coffee Club* which meant you had to be vetted by the authorities. He had never seen her in the coffee shop before. This gave him a clue that perhaps she might be just another of his admirers. She had probably stole past the guard he thought. So be it. That didn't bother him all that much for he was famous, and a famous man meets many women who were, shall we say … adventurous …

She struck up a conversation with him by saying how much she had enjoyed a recent performance he had given in Paris and in particular the virtuosity he had displayed performing a particularly romantic *Nocturne* by Chopin.

He took a liking to her and pulled a chair from another table over to his and then invited her to sit. He smiled. "This piece was one of his favorites," she told her.

"I can see why," she said as she smiled back. "I have tried to learn how to play it but gave up after two months."

“It took me a year to master the piece.” He responded, being polite. In fact he had mastered the piece in just days. Still he tries to play it better every chance he gets.

“So there is hope for me yet?” she sighed.

He nodded. He turned towards the counter and lifted his hand to signal. “Here let me buy you a coffee.” The woman behind the counter nodded her head. He felt the woman’s hand on his arm and turned back to face her.

“Oh sorry …” she removed her hand from his arm. “There is no need … I can order for myself …”

“No let me … I don’t mind,” he responded gallantly.

The coffee shop woman was now standing beside him. “This young woman would like to order something ....”

“May I see your membership card miss,” the coffee shop woman asked officiously.

There was an awkward pause of a second or two before he spoke up. “I have invited her to come join me at my table. … She’s on my bill. ”

The coffee shop woman glanced up at the door guard but he had his back turned to her so she quickly nodded, took her order and scurried back to the counter.

He chortled. “She’s a nervous type … while you are not. You don’t have a membership card do you?””

She slowly shook her head.

He leaned forward and whispered. “Don’t worry I won’t turn you in!” he reassured her.

They chatted politely for a few minutes. He tried to make out her accent. It was not mainland, nor Taiwanese, nor was it Hong Kong … so finally he asked her.

“Vancouver … just visiting. I recognized you and saw you walk into this coffee shop so I chanced it,” she chirped.

He admired her openness and courage. “What do you do in Vancouver?”

“I am a teacher …” she said obliquely.

“What do you teach?” he asked.

She nervously stroked her hair. “This and that …” she said elusively, but that didn’t matter. She was both pretty … and pretty available.

After they had finished their coffee he invited her up to his place. She readily agreed and took his arm. They walked by the guard at the door who gave her

a glaring look. Then the guard grabbed her arm and said, “excuse me miss may I see your membership card?”

He pushed back “leave her be, she is a visitor from Canada. She is with me.”

The guard recognized him, paused a second then stood down.

A few steps up the sidewalk he asked her “how did you get by him?”

“I waited until he turned away. Then I chanced it.” She answered.

“You must be quick on your feet!” he said.

She nodded.

Their flirting began in the elevator. To begin they were at opposite sides of the elevator. By the time they got to his floor, he was standing right beside her. After they had settled into his apartment, he sat at his grand piano and began to play some pieces. The music led to their intimacy. He played her their favorite *Nocturne*. She got up off the couch, walked over, then she straddled him. She wasn’t wearing anything under her dress. She unzipped him. They both looked deep in each other’s eyes. Then they came together at the *Deo gratias*.

It was passionate and brief. Then she dashed off as quickly as she could, grabbing her purse and shoes and in a blink of an eye she was out the door.

He did not even stand up from the piano bench. He squared himself away. It was only after she had gone before he realized he did not even know her name.

That didn't really bother him. His ecstasy had given him the vigour to try out a rather unique interpretation of the final few bars of this *Nocturne* by Chopin. For the first time he got it to his satisfaction, and had her to thank for this.

He did come across her again … but not at the coffee shop mind you. It was at a performance at the Orpheum Theatre in Vancouver seven years later. After the encore to his performance he had stood at the forefront of the stage and as he took his bow he had noticed her four rows back and to one side, glowing angelically.

When he looked up at her she had smiled and waved nervously at him. Somehow she knew he had recognized her. Sitting beside her, hardly noticeable in a sea of adult heads, was a little boy. The little boy looked just like him when he was his age. Then she blew him a kiss. In a split second he understood. He blushed.

His face softened as he returned to the piano and began to play their favourite Chopin piece with such tenderness that she began to cry. Her son asked her why. "Shhh *Nocturne*… your papa is playing the piano."

Above the music he heard her clearly across the concavity of the Orpheum!

When he had finished he stood and hesitated then walked to the corner of the stage and down into the audience, pushing past the stream of strangers who

wanted to shake his hand until he was standing beside her and their little boy. She had tried to make their escape but the surge of people made that impossible. He himself hardly noticed the presence of anyone else but her and their little boy.

Then he was standing beside her. He hugged her and then grabbed hold of her hand not letting her pull free from him. He motioned back to the stage. She grabbed hold of her young son's hand and the three of them swam against the surge.

When they got onto the stage, he sat back down at the grand piano and invited her to sit on one side of him and the little boy on the other. Then he started to play Mendelssohn's *Frühlingslied*. He was a few bars into the piece when the little boy raised his hands to the keys and edged him aside. She and he stood back as the little boy began to play the piece with such tenderness and expertise he, a grown man, started to cry with joy.

You could hear a pin drop in the Orpheum for everyone had come to a stop and listened intently to the playing of *Frühlingslied* by the little boy.

The audience noticed his emotions. When the little boy was finished the room was utterly silent. No one had ever seen a young boy play *Frühlingslied* with such veracity and meaning.

She whispered to him. "He has often wondered who his father was. Now *Nocturne* knows."

Almost on queue the awestruck audience began to applause. The little boy took scared and ran to his mother and hugged her close.

Not known for his modesty, he found it odd to hear himself say … "*Nocturne* plays the piano much better than I did when I was his age."

She smiled and nodded.

I don't even know your name," he suddenly found himself asking.

"Evette …" she whispered.

"Do you have a last name?" He queried.

"Just Evette …" She smirked as she said this and started to lead her son off the stage.

"Don't go. I must talk with you." He pleaded.

"Not here … not now." She looked around the stage.

"Where and when … then?" He said franticly.

"Tomorrow … perhaps …" She hesitated when she said this.

"How about now … tonight?" He started to panic.

She put her arm around her son's shoulder. "I have to take *Nocturne* home. Tomorrow noon."

He frowned. "I leave tomorrow evening at eight."

"Where to?" she asked nonchalantly.

"To Paris and my next performance." He lowered his head as he said this. "I could cancel my next performance and stay a day or two longer."

She laughed at his utterance and shook her head. She paused before asking him "where are you staying?

"The Fairmont Vancouver … room 1102." He whispered.

"I will come and knock on the door of room 1102 at noon tomorrow."

Now he did not feel so panicky. He looked down at the little boy and smiled at him. The little boy sort of smiled back and then they walked away to the stairs at the corner of the stage and then up the long aisle … neither of them looking back.

The last fifteen minutes had overturned his life and left him in a strange state.

She kept her word. The following day there was a knock at his door at noon.

When he opened the door her first reaction to him was “you look awful. Are you feeling ok?”

This caught him off guard. He hadn’t slept that night and hadn’t even left his room. He nodded. He ushered her in.

She shook her head. “I have reserved a table at a small restaurant around the corner.”

“I had hoped we could have a nice quiet lunch here in my room.”

She shook her head and was quite candid with him. “I am ovulating and well remember what happened the last time we spent an intimate moment together …” Evette turned and walked smartly back to the elevator. “Take your time getting yourself ready. I will wait for you down in the lobby.”

It took him a good ten minutes to regain his composure. He reluctantly joined her in the lobby and they dashed up the street for lunch. It was a fancy French restaurant tucked within an upscale boutique hotel a block away from the Fairmount Hotel. She had arranged for a quiet and private table in an alcove opposite both the entrance and the kitchen.

“I imagine you have a thousand questions you want to ask me,” she said even as the waitress stepped away with their order.

He nodded.

“But I will save you a great deal of frustration by telling you what I can tell you.”

It intrigued him the way she said ‘can tell you.’

“What does that really mean?” he queried.

“It means … there is really little I am able to tell you.”

He paused before asking. “Why didn’t you contact me to tell me about our son?”

“You mean *my* son … I carried him within me and pushed him into *my* world.” She said this with a distant demeanour that he found strangely odd.

He hesitated before continuing. “Is everything fine? Do you need any money?”

“No I don’t need anything. Everything is being looked after …” She turned away from him as she said this, then looked carefully around the little restaurant.

He looked over his shoulder but didn’t see anything out of the usual. It looked like he had not been recognized. He turned back to face her. “I read in the Globe & Mail about my concert. It said that the journalist wanted to interview you about …” he was about to say our son before he corrected himself, “ … *Nocturne*. But it said you refused.”

She nodded.

“Why did you do that? I thought you would be proud of *Nocturne* …”

“I am proud of him … but I am not allowed to publicize ...”

“Not allowed?” That sounds silly. He played Mendelssohn’s *Frühlingslied* perfectly.”

“It’s an easy piece for him ...”

“Easy? At his age?”

“Yes. *Nocturne* has an IQ of 185. So does my other son … I only have an I.Q. of 165 …”

The fact they were so smart was no surprise to him. “You have another son?”

She nodded. “I actually have three boys. The oldest is twelve, *Nocturne* is six and my youngest son is just a few months old. I am still breast feeding him … so I can’t stay long for lunch.”

He felt compelled to ask. “Three sons … three different fathers?”

She nodded but didn’t say anything.

He looked down at the table in silence. "So I was just … you know …"

"Just what?"

"A donor … of sorts."

She nodded.

"All this seems … odd …"

Before she could say anything the waitress arrived with their *soupe a l'onion*.

When they were again alone she whispered. "*You were matched with me*."

Her five simple words added to the strangeness of things.

"What do you mean matched with me?" he asked sharply.

"Genetically … and perhaps even epigenetically …" she said between spoonfuls of her soup.

"By whom?"

"If I told you would you promise not to tell anyone?" she said with guile

He pushed his soup away from in front of him. He had suddenly lost his appetite.

“You have to promise …” she stopped eating her soup as well.

“Why?”

“They will not appreciate the publicity.” She said sternly. Besides I would get into trouble … and so would your son *Nocturne*.”

The words ‘*your son*’ took on an ominous tone.

“I don’t know what this is all about … I just play the piano.”

“And play it very well … that’s what it is about.” She looked at him directly in the eyes. Her eyes lacked sparkle and warmth. They seem distant and tired.

“I don’t understand … is that why you seduced me … so we could have a baby?”

“How much have you made performing? Millions and millions …”

“So you want some of my wealth do you … for *Nocturne*.”

She shook her head.

He was about to continue when the waitress return to take away the soup bowls. “Was the onion soup not to your liking?” she inquired. “I am about to bring your *Sole Normandie*.”

She turned to the waitress and said “the soup was nice. It’s just that neither of us have an appetite at the moment. Perhaps you can bring us the desert menu and some coffee?”

Then they were again alone.

“Someone did a genomic typing of me and found I have a near perfect genome. I don’t carry diseases like diabetes, asthma, heart disease, cancer and the like. Didn’t someone do a genomic typing of you when you were at the *Conservatoire* in Paris …”

He shook his head.

“Well that’s what I was told …”

He remembered back to his time in Europe and remembered he had to go to the hospital when he had a bad case of influenza. They had taken blood samples.

She let his think for a moment before continuing. “They ran our genomic code through a computer program and found us to be a perfect match.”

“Who are they …”

She frowned.

“Or can I not ask that?”

She shook her head.

He looked around the restaurant. “They must be very powerful.”

He shook her head again.

“What then?” He was not one prone to conspiracy theories but a shiver went up his back when he asked this.

“It’s not a humongous transnational organization if that is what you are thinking.” She whispered.

“I’m confused then … if it is not big … but it is powerful … what are you saying?”

“They just don’t want to be found out. They are trying to do something rather important for humanity.”

“What is that?”

“Medical science will not be able to cure every human disease. As the population of the Earth continues to double every thirty years or so, so will the incidence of human disease. You can see that already in cognitive decline, mental illness and heart disease.”

“So it is a group of doctors is it?”

“Some are, but most are scientists. The father of my oldest boy is a rather intelligent mathematician.”

“And your youngest son … who is his father?” he asked scornfully.

“A biochemist and horticulturalist.”

“You used me!”

“Don’t be so cross with me. At the time you seemed to be enjoying yourself.” She put him in his place.

He was silent for a moment as he tried to ponder what to ask her next. “What do they call themselves?”

She paused a moment before finding the courage to whisper “*Consortia* …”

“*Consortia* …” he repeated.

She nodded.

“And where can I find this *Consortia*?”

“You don’t find them … they find you.”

He understood the nuance. "So you are not one of them?"

She shook her head. "Not really. When I was in grad school I was approached to be part of a genomic study. I agreed to let some professors do a genetic make-up of me. I guess they noticed something special about me."

"Something special?"

Just then the waitress arrived with their coffees and the desert menu. She ordered a triple chocolate cheesecake and he ordered *une mille feuilles*.

She waited until the waitress was gone before continuing. "I never tire and never need much sleep. Just a few hours each day. And I have an efficient metabolism. They were curious why … I guess they found their answers."

"I am a little bit like that too." He acknowledged

"So they noticed … That's one of the reasons they matched us together."

"So why did you come and you know … seduce me?"

"They paid me to do it. If I got pregnant with your child they would give me $ 25,000. If I delivered the baby they would give me another $ 250,000. And they would pay all the costs of raising and home schooling him until he was sixteen."

"Wow … why the home schooling?" he was curious.

"*Nocturne* doesn't go to a normal school. He has piano lessons twice a day and also learns his normal schooling."

"I take it this is the same for your eldest, except its mathematics for him right?"

She nodded. "They were both brought into the world after thirty two weeks, born naturally through induced labour. That is one of the reasons why their I.Q.s are so high. Now they are mentored to excel at their predestined professions."

"I came into the world early too, and my parents mentored my musical talents."

She nodded acknowledgement before she continued. "But I can't say my son's immune systems are fully developed. That is one of the reasons they are homeschooled. This is to keep them safe from harm."

"So what is this *Consortia* trying to do, create some super-soldier?"

"Oh no … you're not listening. Mathematician, musician, biochemist and horticulturalist .... no super-soldiers here! I would never want any of my sons to become soldiers. Which mother would?"

The waitress delivered their deserts and topped up their coffees then left them alone.

“So what is the *Consortia* doing then?” he continued.

“As society crumbles we risk entering another dark age.” She whispered. She enjoyed a mouth full of her triple chocolate cheesecake.

“And when does the *Consortia* consider this may happen?”

“They think it has already begun. Looks what is happening around the world.”

“It seems to me what we see around the world is the same old … same old …”

She shrugged. “Well … at the very least my sons will be well looked after.”

“And where does that leave you and I?” he asked Evette.

“I guess we shall have to fend for ourselves, won’t we?” She had finished her cheesecake. He hadn’t even touched his mille feuille.

She looked at her watch. “I only have a few minutes to spare then I must go.”

“Will I see you again?”

“Only if they needed another piano player …” she said haughtily.

He frowned.

She took this as her queue to leave. She tossed her serviette onto her empty plate. “Don’t worry about the bill it has all been looked after.”

He could not bring himself to stand, nor even to look up at her. In the space of a few hours he had found out he had a son, and now it looked like he would not see the two of them ever again.

She stopped beside him and placed her hand on his shoulder. This reminded him of the first time she had touched him at the *Shanghai Coffee Shop*. He placed his hand atop hers and pressed down.

She pressed back. “I know you love women … and that women adore you. If you want your own son you know what you should do …”

Then she was gone. Then he was once again very much alone.

After a few minutes the waitress came to see how he was doing. He hadn’t moved or even touched his coffee or desert.

“Is everything ok?” she asked him.

He turned his head and smiled meekly.

“I recognize you,” the waitress said. “You performed last night at the Orpheum.

He nodded sadly.

“I particularly enjoyed your last encore and the little boy who came to play Mendelssohn for you.”

“You were there were you?” He lowered his head.

She nodded. “Listen I got off in a few minutes. Perhaps we can have a cup of coffee together. I would love to chat with you about music. I love Chopin.”

He looked up at her broad hips. A thought came to mind. “Do you like Sole Normandie?”

“Yes … it’s my fav.” She said reaching back and tousled her hair.

He set down his serviette and stood. “I am in room 1102 at the Fairmont Hotel. If you want to chat about music what say you bring the Sole Normandie over?”

She started to clear away the table and watched as he walked out of the restaurant.

Less than an hour later they were listening to him playing Chopin on his cd player and were floundering about in each other’s arms. Then onto *Deo gratias.*

The Loin Cloth Scandal by Henry Adams

Throughout his life, Eakins was involved in feuds and quarrels. These often contained an element of conspiracy, with individuals shifting sides and plotting against one another. Because these scandals were so numerous and the charges against Eakins so serious, it becomes far-fetched to suppose that he was completely faultless and innocent. But if we simply take the role of prose-cuting attorney and seek to pin the blame on Eakins, we run the risk of over-simplifying and misrepresenting both his actions and his intentions. Eakins's contemporaries were clearly bewildered about both his behavior and his motivations, and seem to have shifted sides because they often found that their initial explanations for his actions did not hold up. In short, the first step toward understanding Eakins is to recognize that his behavior was truly puzzling and that something by no means simple or straightforward was taking place.

An understanding of Eakins is made difficult by the fact that his behavior touched on an area of life, namely sex, which most nineteenth-century Philadelphians did not like to discuss in public.' Moreover, the Victorian vocabulary for describing or analyzing sexual activity was quite limited. It was possible to judge whether sexual behavior was "moral" or "immoral," but all "immoral" sexual behavior tended to be grouped in a single category. The highly specific character of certain sexual aberrations and obsessions was not understood, and sexual motivations were not clearly distinguished. As a consequence of this fact, every accusation against Eakins needs to be weighed and analyzed carefully. On the one hand we can often fill in what was left unsaid for reasons of prudery or embarrassment. On the other, we need to

consider that many statements were probably misleading, since they were based on supposition about Eakins's motives rather than solid evidence. Eakins's contemporaries seem to have been confused about whether Eakins's behavior was "moral" or "immoral" because something about it did not make sense to them.

Reducing these conflicts to a linear narrative is not easy, since the episodes often overlap and run together. Later disputes would often raise issues and complaints from some previous one, which would then be replayed, often in a fashion slightly twisted from the first occurrence. In many instances the disturbances that Eakins created are not well documented, and consequently are susceptible to more than one explanation. But as we run through the various episodes, certain patterns recur. Indeed, events that are puzzling viewed by themselves, begin to make sense when we match them up with other similar incidents. To start with, it seems to me, the best approach for making sense of Eakins is not to cast judgment, but simply to look for patterns that repeat themselves. Given that none of the existing explanations seems satisfactory, even small details are worth attending to, since they may point toward a different way of viewing things. At the risk of being tedious or confusing, it is worth looking at these scandals in detail, going back to the primary sources.

Since the story has as many characters as a novel by Tolstoy, I have added a biographical key at the back of the book, which summarizes the lives of the key figures and clarifies their relationship to each other.

The best-known scandal of Eakins's career—his dismissal from the Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts—is one of the least well documented. The directors of the Academy provided no explanation for their decision and left no report or transcript of the investigation of Eakins that they conducted. While he made occasional references to the episode, Eakins never made a detailed statement in his defense, either at the time of the firing or afterwards. The Bregler papers contain useful information about this event, but the references are often cryptic and for the most part made in connection with later controversies. When all the available evidence is assembled, however, we can piece together roughly what happened.

At the time the Bregler papers were acquired, Elizabeth Johns conjectured that they would demonstrate that Eakins was fired from the Pennsylvania Academy because of disputes over the curriculum he imposed and its excessively rigorous approach.' In fact, this guess could not have been more wrong. What the papers reveal instead is that the complaints against Eakins were bit-ter and personal, rather than professional, and that many of those who were closest to him, including members of his immediate family, had grave doubts about his moral character.

As has already been mentioned, Eakins was fired from the Pennsylvania Academy after undraping a male model in front of a class of female students. This precipitated complaints that led to his resignation about a month later. The classic account of Eakins's firing was given by Goodrich in four crisp sentences:

> A few proper females complained to the directors. A special committee was formed, which upon hearing both sides ruled that Eakins must exercise restrictions in posing the model, or resign. His reply was that he would remain only on condition that he was not hampered in his teaching. On February 13, 1886, his resignation was presented to the directors and accepted.?

Goodrich's summary remains the basis of most subsequent accounts, but every sentence of his paragraph is incorrect or misleading except the last phrase indicating that Eakins resigned, which did indeed occur. Goodrich implies that the directors of the Academy fired Eakins because of the loin cloth episode. In fact, the directors of the Academy initially came to Eakins's defense. At the time the first scandal broke, one trustee even told a journalist that the loin cloth matter was simply "a tempest in a teapot." It seems clear that something of a more serious nature surfaced shortly afterwards, and led the directors to reverse their earlier position. In other words, the loin cloth incident was significant only because it led to the disclosure of more serious problems.

Goodrich states that the attacks against Eakins came from a few prudish individuals. In his account of Eakins's resignation he reduces this group to "a few proper females," although elsewhere in his book he mentions that the opposition came from "a small group of Eakins's own staff and students." In fact, Eakins's entire teaching staff sided against him. His most vigorous enemy was his main teaching assistant and second-in-command, Thomas Anshutz, but Anshutz was backed by the other instructors, James Kelly and Colin Campbell Cooper, as well as by the anatomy demonstrators, Mary

Searle, Charlotte Connard, and Jesse Godley.' There is no evidence that any of these figures was a prude. The student body seems to have been about evenly divided between those who supported Eakins and those who advocated his ouster. The group advocating Eakins's ouster, however, included many of his most talented students, as well as members of his extended family. Among the members of this group were Alice Barber, one of his two most gifted female students, who went on to become a successful illustrator; his brother-in-law Frank Stevens; and Elizabeth Macdowell, the sister of Eakins's wife.

Goodrich and other writers have always implied that resistance to Eakins came from "proper Philadelphia society," and was led by individuals opposed to the use of nude models. This does not seem to have been the case. Eakins's opponents were artistic colleagues and former friends, most of whom accepted the use of nude models as a matter of course. Possibly personality factors contributed to the conflict. There is ample evidence that Eakins imposed his way on people, without much regard for their feelings. Even his nickname suggests a stubborn and authoritarian quality: his students knew him as "The Boss." Nonetheless, the extent of the opposition to Eakins, and the fact that this group was successful in persuading the directors to push Eakins out, strongly suggests that Eakins had done something either quite shocking or unarguably out of line with guidelines that had been laid down by the board.

Goodrich also implies that Eakins's resignation was a calculated moral decision—that he was given the choice of staying if he changed his manner of teaching, but that he refused to do so. In fact, there is no evidence that Eakins was given the choice of retaining his post if he agreed to relinquish study of the nude model. On the contrary, the trustees were apparently so

distressed by what their inquiry turned up that they insisted Eakins submit his resignation.

It appears that there were four general complaints. First, Eakins was undoubtedly criticized for his seemingly excessive emphasis on the nude. When he became director of the art school of the Academy, he eliminated all the courses in design, still-life painting and landscape. Except for training in perspective, every class in his program was devoted to some aspect of rendering the nude. While men and women worked separately from each other, he insisted on using models of both sexes for both male and female classes. This seems to have been considered particularly shocking for women, since in the nineteenth century most women led protected lives, within the confines of the home. As early as 1882, a certain R. S. (who seems to have been the mother of a student or prospective student) wrote to James Claghorn, the president of the Academy, to complain about the emphasis on the nude, which she felt was morally offensive. As she protested:

> Would you be willing … to know [your daughter] was sitting there with a dozen others, studying a nude figure, while the professor walked around criticizing the nudity, as to her roundness in this part, and swell of the muscles in another? That daughter at home had been shielded from every thought that might lead her young mind from the most rigid chastity. Her mother had never allowed her to see her young naked brothers, hardly her sisters after their babyhood & yet at the age of eighteen or nineteen, for the culture of high Art, she has entered a class where both male & female figures stood before her in their horrid nakedness. This is no imaginary picture.

This statement has often been used to vindicate Eakins, yet we can also read it as an assertion of the prevailing social norm in Philadelphia, where young girls might come to study art having never seen a naked figure, either male or female. While this letter has been widely ridiculed, it indicates how radically Eakins's procedures violated the social conventions of the times, at least for Philadelphia." No doubt the directors of the Academy were aware of this tension.

Nonetheless, Eakins's use of nude models, by itself, can hardly have led to his departure, for it was a recognized part of professional artistic training. Eakins's emphasis on the nude was already known to the board, and they had gone along with his curricular changes, although perhaps reluctantly. After Eakins's departure the teachers at the school continued to use nude models, just as they had when Eakins was director.

Second and more serious was student complaints that Eakins's behavior was often coarse. He employed crude language, was fond of dirty jokes, and often seemed to take delight in drawing attention to matters usually not discussed, such as male genitals and excrement. When dissecting male cadavers, for example, Eakins did not remove the penis, as was apparently the practice at the time. When he presented the cadaver to the class he not only exposed the penis but also discussed his decision at great length. When discussing bodily functions he did not use polite euphemisms, but, as several students complained, made a point of loudly asking his female pupils if they needed to "pee." He also told dirty jokes, including one about plums that presumably dealt with diarrhea. Indeed, his fascination with anal matters was noted by

several of his students. Around the time of the Eakins memorial exhibition, one student wrote a letter to Bryson Burroughs about Eakins's personality that contained the following story:

> One day in the woman's modeling class (they had a live cow as model) the cow started to answer a call of nature. Eakins was criticizing one of the young ladies and when he saw this he jumped up and fairly yelled to Anshutz. "Get the camera, Tommy, I have discovered a new muscle! You can imagine the effect. Eakins was full of stories and jokes.'

Surely some of Eakins's pupils must have been less than delighted by such emphasis on the anus of a defecating cow. This sort of behavior would be shocking today, let alone in a society that draped piano legs, so that they would not be seen in public undressed. Clearly this issue of coarse behavior represented a legitimate matter of concern.

However, issues of tone and propriety are open to wide variations of interpretation, and it was often a matter of dispute whether Eakins had been offensive or simply excessively frank. If this issue of verbal propriety had been the only matter raised against Eakins, it seems likely that he would have escaped with a reprimand, rather than insistence that he resign.

Third, and more serious, Eakins had defied the normal boundaries between student, instructor and model: he had pressured students to pose in the nude and he had taken his own clothes off in front of students. Many accounts indicate that he coaxed and badgered his female students to pose nude, whether or not they were willing to do so. When they resisted, he did not back

off, but continued to pressure them to undress. He seems to have applied similar coercive tactics to his male students as well.

This practice stirred up a good deal of gossip, and stories about his behavior were still circulating fifty years later, when Goodrich began collecting material for his biography. In his 1933 monograph, Goodrich mentioned one such incident:

> Once when a model in the women's class had not appeared, and he was explaining an anatomical point about the female back, he asked one of the young ladies to take off her clothes so that they could see her back; but instead she burst into tears and went home, and told her father, who caused a com-motion which was with difficulty smoothed over.

As so often happens with Goodrich's accounts, the episode is reported in a way that seems to justify Eakins's behavior but is evasive about key points. Thus, Goodrich implies that Eakins was acting from necessity, but does not specify whether the model was just a few minutes late or completely failed to appear. He also does not clarify a key point, that is, whether Eakins asked the young woman to undress completely or simply to show her back. The one thing that we know for sure is that the student was distressed by his behavior.

Goodrich was also told about a young woman who had an unusual talent for catching a likeness. Supposedly, she carelessly left her sketchbook of drawings of naked fellow students in the classroom, where it was found by the incoming men's class, to their scandal and enjoyment. As Goodrich notes, this story has the quality of a fiction.'? Nonetheless, it may contain at least a

grain of truth, since in one of his letters Eakins himself blamed a female student for the circulation of the names of his models. With characteristically awkward grammar and poor punctuation he noted:

> One of the women pupils, some years ago gave to her lover who communicated it to Mr. Frank Stephens a list of these pupils [who had posed in the nude] as far as she knew them.

While Eakins does not provide the name of this female pupil, he was probably referring to Alice Barber, one of his most talented students, who became a successful illustrator. Alice Barber married Charles Stephens, who played a major role in the campaign against Eakins, and she was undoubtedly a key source for the stories that Stephens circulated. In fact, Barber seems to have suffered from malicious gossip because she had posed nude. As Eakins's sister Frances recalled in 1890, four years after he was fired:

> Take Alice Barber, for instance. Her crime was having posed for her professor, yet when discovered her name was made subject of coarse jest among low New York students.

Eakins also had undressed in front of his students. It is unclear exactly what the directors of the Academy discovered during their inquiry, but eight months after Eakins was fired, in September 1886, Eakins freely admitted to Edward Horner Coates, the president of the board, that he had invited one of his female students, Amelia Van Buren, to come to his studio so that he could explain an anatomical point about the pelvis. "There stripping myself, I gave her the explanation as I could not have done by words only.

In addition to the somewhat fragmentary written evidence, we also have another form of testimony—Eakins's own photographs. Around 1976 a group of twenty-one prints, most of them of nudes, were discovered in the safe deposit box of Edward Coates. Evidently he had confiscated them at the time of the Academy scandal, both as evidence and to prevent them from falling into the wrong hands. Additional photographs have also surfaced in other places, including many in the Bregler collection. While we do not have Coates's letter, Eakins later mentioned that Coates had complained that

Eakins "had made photographs of female pupils naked," so there can be little doubt that this issue surfaced at this time. … But two points should be mentioned: first, many of these photographs portray students who are nude, often in full frontal nudity; and second, many of these photographs contain indications that the models were not comfortable, such as averted gazes or other signs of embarrassment. The photographs thus appear to confirm what is indicated in written accounts—that Eakins's students posed in the nude for him, and that some were reluctant but complied because of intense pressure or coercion from their teacher. In his teaching and demonstrations of anatomy, Eakins also regularly placed his hands on the model, which must have made his breach of the usual standards of decorum even more distressing.

Male Nude Sitting on Modeling Stand, Holding Small Sculpture of Horse, in Pennsylvania Academy Studio, ca. 1885. *Albumen print, 3 13/16 × 4 3/4 in., courtesy of The Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts, Philadelphia, Charles Bregler's Thomas Eakins Collection, purchased with the partial support of the Pew Memorial Trust.*

Photographs of Eakins himself in the nude have also come to light. These fall into two categories. A first group shows Eakins standing nude in front, back, and side views. These shots were allegedly taken to demonstrate some-thing about human posture. A second group shows him standing beside a nude woman or carrying this woman in his arms. It is not clear what purpose this second group served. Taken together, the photographs securely document both that Eakins posed his students in the nude and that he himself undressed in front of them.

Female Nude Sitting on Queen Anne Chair, ca. 1885. *Platinum print, 4 ⁵⁄₁₆ x 3 in., courtesy of The Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts, Philadelphia, Charles Bregler's Thomas Eakins Collection, purchased with the partial support of the Pew Memorial Trust.*

This charge of using students as models was surely the most damaging of the allegations against Eakins, and the photographs that Coates collected left no doubt that this charge was true. For one thing, the board had specifically requested that Eakins not engage in this practice. Thus, in purely legalistic terms, they were justified in firing him for failing to obey their directives. In addition, such conduct clearly went against normal artistic practice and the customary professional standards of artists and art schools. Many American and European art teachers used nude models, but they allowed their students to retain their clothes, indeed, insisted that they do so. The fact that Eakins had also undressed in front of his students surely added significantly to the case against him. Although Eakins maintained that his reasons were "*professional*," there was no professional precedent, either in Europe or America, for such a practice.

African-American Girl Nude, Reclining on Couch, ca. 1882. *Albumen print, 1 7/16 x 2 7/16 in., courtesy of The Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts, Philadelphia, Charles Bregler's Thomas Eakins Collection, purchased with the partial support of the Pew Memorial Trust.* Eakins photographed not only naked adults but children as well. LEFT *Three Female Nudes, Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts, ca. 1883, albumen print, 5 x 3 5/8 in., Founders Society Purchase, Robert H. Tannahill Foundation Fund, photograph © 1984 The Detroit Institute of Arts.* This photograph confiscated by Edward Coates showed three female students posing nude in a classroom at The Pennsylvania Academy.

The fourth and final accusation was that Eakins had engaged in sexual misconduct, including not only improper advances on students, but more shocking practices, including sodomy, bestiality, and incest. Such stories were apparently still circulating about Eakins at the time that Goodrich began his research, although because of Goodrich's circumspection we will probably never know what they were. With his usual tendency to dismiss evidence that did not place Bakins in a favorable light, Goodrich noted, "Another conservative pupil told wilder tales, which were made unreliable by his inaccuracy in other matters.

Since the witnesses against Eakins testified behind closed doors, and no record of their statements was made, we do not know specifically what charges were made against him at the time of the Academy scandal. Shortly

afterwards, however, public allegations about Eakins's misbehaviour began to surface. Eakins's brother-in-law, Frank Stephens, was particularly active in pushing forward charges of sexual misconduct, and he was supported by other witnesses, such as Alice Barber and Thomas Anshutz.

Such charges of sexual immorality surely must have been disturbing to the directors of the Academy, who were concerned about the school's good reputation. Yet these charges were difficult to prove and in many cases may have appeared implausible. In fact, one of the arguments frequently raised in Eakins's defense was that there was no solid evidence (such as an illegitimate child, an estranged mistress, or a clear accusation of rape) that he had ever seduced a female student. He himself maintained that his motives were purely professional in nature. In short, while Eakins's behavior toward students clearly violated normal social boundaries and art school practices, his motives were far from clear.

Paradoxically, the scandalous nature of Eakins's behavior provided him with protection, since neither the students involved nor the directors of the Academy wished these matters to be widely known. Female students were naturally embarrassed that they had been pressured into posing in the nude, while the Academy did not wish it to be publicly revealed that such activities had occurred. As a consequence, during the inquiry into Eakins's activities, students made their accusations orally rather than in writing, and the Academy did not preserve its report on their investigation, if indeed it was ever written. When the Academy dismissed Eakins, it gave no reasons other beyond a general need for "a change of management of the school."

Newspaper articles of the time also used evasive language to describe what happened, although they hinted at something scandalous. Thus, for example, an article in the Philadelphia Evening Bulletin stated:

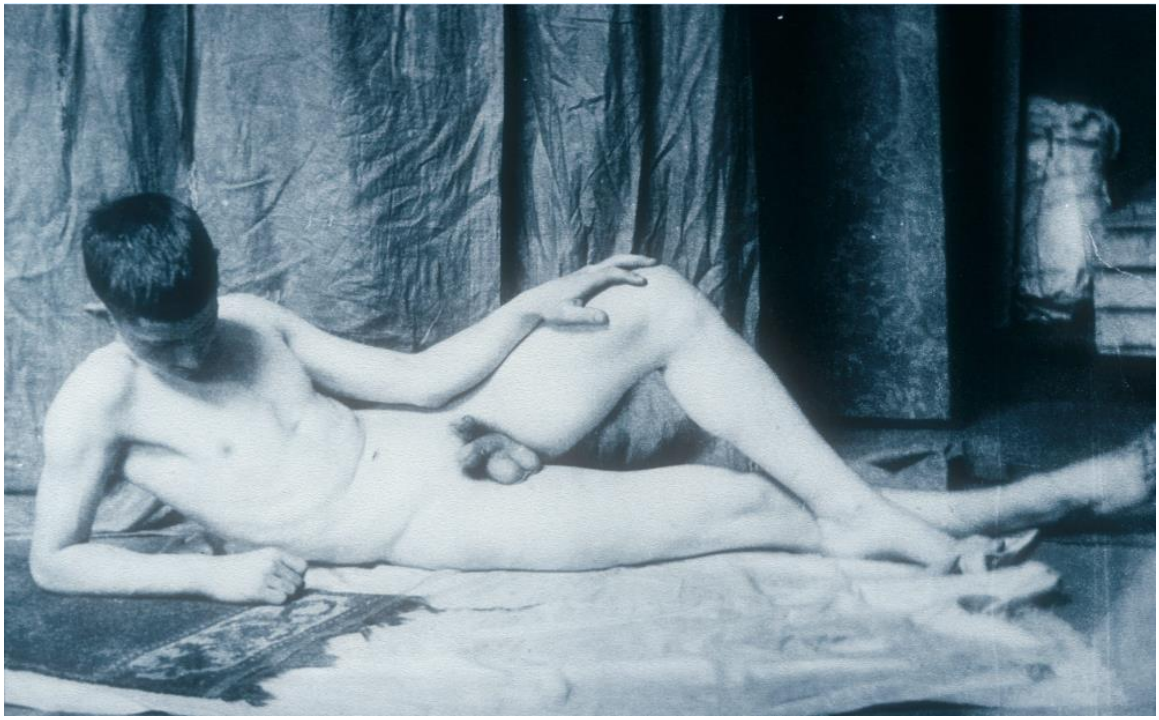
> With a few abnormal exceptions the women at the Life School recognized the fact that much as they might risk in coming in conflict with the Academy authorities, they would risk infinitely more by accepting the conditions that Mr. Eakins proposed to force upon them.

The phrasing of the article strongly suggests that the writer knew that Eakins had pressured his students to undress, but significantly, he alluded to this through discrete hints rather than direct statements. While Eakins's troubles have generally been blamed on Victorian prudery, his behavior would be considered even more inappropriate today. The Victorians had only vague standards of "morality" and "proper conduct" with which to regulate Eakins, and they tended to support male authority. Today we have a legal concept—sexual harassment—that could be applied against him, and a long series of legal precedents defining the nature of such behavior. In today's world, Eakins would not only be fired, but would be subject to lawsuits by the women he pressured to undress. Thus, for example, Anne McCauley has noted of Eakins:

> His reported loose language and telling of off-color stories to his female students (to say nothing of the famous episode of dropping his trousers to make an anatomical point) could by modern standards be considered sexual harassment.

Surprisingly, opposition to Eakins did not end when he was dismissed. Instead, it simply moved on to other arenas, where the conflict simmered on for the remainder of Eakins's life. The ensuing feuds and conflicts were so numerous, and such a mix of public and private, that it is difficult to reduce them to a linear narrative. But what is most startling about the revelations of the Bregler papers is that they show that much of the opposition to Eakins came not from professional colleagues, but from within his own family. At the risk of oversimplification, it is convenient to divide this thirty-year war into two major battles, the first setting Eakins against his youngest sister Caroline and her husband Frank Stephens, and the other pitting Eakins against his only other surviving sister, Frances, and her husband, Will Crowell. Siblings, in-laws, cousins, pupils, and acquaintances were progressively drawn into both conflicts, creating a mud-slinging melee of accusations and recriminations.

Pictorial: Eakins Male Nude



One Evening by Colette

[**Paris, 1922**] As soon as the gate had closed behind us and we saw the lantern bobbing along in front, in the gardener's hand, under a covering of clipped yews so thick that only an occasional spatter of rain could penetrate it, we began to feel that a hospitable refuge must be at hand, and that the accident to our motor which had left us stranded out in the open country must be classed as a blessing in disguise.

And, indeed, it actually came to pass that Mr. B., the master of the house, who received the two dripping and unexpected female tourists on the steps, was a lawyer who knew my husband slightly, and that I had met his wife, formerly a pupil at the *Schola Cantorum*, at the Dominican concerts.

When we were finally seated at the hearth, in front of the first wood fire of the year, a spontaneous babble of gaiety broke forth. Nothing would do but that Valentine and I should eat a pick-up of cold meat and champagne—our hosts, it seemed, had just finished their dinner. An ancient vintage of plum brandy and steaming hot coffee put us immediately on intimate terms. They had electric lights, which were very unusual in that region, and I savoured the familiar fragrances of yellow tobacco, ripe fruit, and the resinous wood they were burning, as if they had been wafted from some newly discovered, enchanted isle.

Mr. B., robust, stocky, scarcely tinged with grey, and blessed with a flashing smile as radiant as the noonday sun, immediately engaged Valentine in conversation; and I— well, I talked rather less with Madame B. than I stared

at her. She was small and blond, dressed as one might be for a banquet instead of to receive stray motorists; but it was her eyes that so astounded me. They were so clear and limpid that their natural pale blue varied with every breath of thought or feeling. One moment they would become violet, like her dress; the next green, like the silk material of her chair; and when, for an instant, they looked troubled, they turned, in the reflection of the lamplight, almost red, as the blue irises of angora cats are seen to do when they are angry. I asked myself if these almost too translucent eyes did not give to the whole face its air of absent-mindedness, of empty amiability, its smile at times almost that of a somnambulist. A somnambulist, at all events, singularly attentive to our pleasure, and careful to make the two or three hours pass quickly in which our chauffeur and Mr. B.'s mechanic would be occupied in repairing the car.

"We have a room at your disposal," said Madame B., "why not spend the night here?" And her eyes expressed only an utter loneliness, a loneliness devoid even of a thought.

"You're not so badly off here," she resumed. "Just see how well my husband is getting on with your friend."

She laughed, but her eyes, wide and empty, seemed scarcely cognizant of her words. For the second time she made me repeat some slight phrase, trembling a little as she did so. What was it, morphine, opium? An inebriate would never have had those rosy lips, that smooth forehead, that soft, cool hand, or that flesh so young and tender, swelling up from beneath the low-necked gown.

Was I dealing with a mute victim of marital unhappiness? It could not be. The most Machiavellian tyrant could not have uttered the name “Simone” so tenderly, or rested upon his slave a glance of such affectionate admiration.

“Yes, Madame, they really do exist,” Mr. B. was saying at that very moment to my friend, Valentine. “There really are families that live in the country eight months of the year, never are separated for so much as a week, and yet do not find anything to complain of in their lot. Isn’t that so, Simone?”

“Yes, thank heavens, there are,” said Simone, and her pale blue eyes held nothing but a tiny yellow flame, very far away, caught from the reflection of the lamplight on the bulging side of the samovar. Then she rose and poured us some hot tea, dashed with rum, for a nightcap.

A young man came in, bare-headed, and, without being introduced, gave some opened letters to Mr. B., who excused him¬ self to Valentine and ran rapidly through his mail.

“It’s my husband’s secretary,” said Simone, who was cutting a lemon into thin slices.

I spoke my thought:

“He’s a nice young fellow.”

“You think so?”

She raised her eyebrows in the surprised manner of one who should say, “Really, I never thought of that before.” But this slim young man, not in the least embarrassed, struck one with his air of willfulness, with his trick of lowering his eyelids, which, when he suddenly raised them, made his abrupt, keen glance—quickly veiled, and more disdainful than shy—extremely compelling. He took a cup of tea and sat down before the fire beside Madame B. in one of those atrocities of the eighties, consisting of two attached seats in the shape of an S, which they used to call tete-a-tetes.

There was a moment’s silence, when I feared that we might have exhausted the hospitality of our kind hosts. I murmured, to break the pause, “What solid comfort! I shall remember this charming house in which I have passed an evening without even knowing what it looks like from the outside. This fire will warm us again, will it not, Valentine, when, in a few minutes, we shut our eyes against the wind and …”

“If you go, it will be your own fault,” cried Madame B. “But if I were in your place I shouldn’t complain. I love the open road, the night, the rain that streaks the air in front of the headlights, the drops on one’s cheeks like tears, oh I love all that!”

I looked at her in amazement. She was aglow with a delicious human flame that shyness had, perhaps, smothered during the early hours of the evening. She did not withdraw again into herself, and the most appealing candour showed her to us as gay, witty, conversant with the politics of the locality and with the ambitions of her husband, whom she pretended to tease by mimicking him in the manner of little girls who are playing at make-believe. There was

no lamp on the mantel¬ piece; and only the wavering glow from the hearth, at some distance from the central illumination, touched or left in shadow this young woman, whose sudden animation made me think of the liveliness of canaries wakened in their cages when the lights are turned on at nightfall. The black back of the secretary leaned against his half of the S-shaped chair in which he sat with Madame B.

While she was talking to her husband and my friend, turning towards them, I rose to set my empty cup down, and I saw one hand of the young man, which was concealed from their view, pressing her bare arm in a grip steady and motionless, just above the elbow. Neither of them moved. In his unoccupied hand, the young man held a cigarette, and in hers Madame B. toyed with a fan. She chatted gaily, attentive to everyone, her eyes clear, and in a voice in which her rapid breathing some¬ times made a little catch, such as one experiences when one wants to laugh. And I saw the veins of her hand swell under the firm, passionate pressure.

As if he realized that he was being observed, the secretary suddenly rose, bade us goodnight and withdrew.

“Isn’t that our motor I hear outside?” I asked a moment later.

Madame B. did not answer. She was looking at the fire, with her head bent a little to one side, seeming to listen to an all but inaudible sound, and looking, in the drooping of her whole body, like a woman who had been stunned. I repeated my question. She trembled.

“Yes, yes, I think so,” she answered quickly. She raised her eyelids and smiled a mechanical smile—her eyes again cold and wide and empty—“It’s too bad!”

We left, carrying late roses and dahlias from their garden. Mr. B. walked beside the automobile, which rolled along gently, as far as the first turn in the lane. Madame B. stood on the lighted steps, smiling at us with a face from which the desire to live seemed to have passed—one hand, beneath a transparent scarf, was pressed upon her bare arm just a little above the elbow.

The Public and the Artist by Jean Cocteau

[**Paris, 1922**] I am working at my wooden table, seated on my wooden chair with my wooden penholder in my hand, but this does not prevent me from being, in some degree, responsible for the course of the stars.

A dreamer is always a bad poet. Nietzsche was afraid of certain "ands"; Goethe and Schiller, for example, or, worse still, Schiller and Goethe. What would he say at seeing the spread of the cult of Nietzsche and Wagner or, rather, Wagner and Nietzsche!

The opposition of the masses to the elite has always stimulated individual genius. This is the case in France. Modern Germany is dying of approbation, carefulness, faithful application and a scholastic vulgarization of aristocratic culture.

Let us keep clear of the theatre. I regret to have felt its temptation and to have introduced to it two great artists. "Well, then, why do you write for the theatre?" That is precisely the weak point about the theatre; it is forced to depend, for its very existence, upon immediate successes.

When I say that I prefer certain circus or music-hall turns to anything given in the theatre, I do not mean that I prefer them to anything that might be given in the theatre.

One day I was looking at a children's puppet show in the Champs Elysees when a dog came on the stage, or rather a dog's head, as big in itself as the two other actors put together. "Look at that monster," said a mother to her child. "That is not a monster, it is a dog," said her little boy. Men, as they grow older, lose—when in a theatre —the clairvoyance they had as children.

Tradition appears at every epoch under a different disguise, but the public does not recognize it under its masks.

That which makes the public laugh is not inevitably beautiful or new, but that which is beautiful and new inevitably makes the public laugh.

"Cultivate those qualities in thee for which the public blames thee: they are Thyself." Get this idea well into your head. This advice ought to be written up every¬ where like an advertisement of "Pear's Soap." As a matter of fact, the public likes to "recognize" what is familiar. It hates to be disturbed. It is shocked by surprises. The worst that can happen to a work of art is to have no fault found with it, so that its author is not obliged to take up an attitude of opposition.

The public only takes up yesterday as a weapon with which to castigate today.

There are people who are considered quite intelligent, but who do nothing but lean toward good things in art. Their heads get near them, but the rest of their bodies remain rooted.

A favorite phrase of the public is: "I don't see what that's meant to be." The public wants to understand first and to feel afterwards.

A fall makes people laugh. The mechanism of falling plays an important part in causing the laughter which greets a new work. The public, not having followed the curve which leads up to this work, stumbles suddenly from where it was standing, down on to the work which it is now seeing or hearing. Consequently a fall takes place— and laughter.

A short phrase quickly spoken and full of meaning traverses the brain like a surgeon's lancet. Ten minutes later it is no longer there.

We have in our keeping an angel whom we are continually shocking. We must be that angel's guardian.

One does not blame an epoch; one congratulates oneself on not having belonged to it.

Instinct and the Artist

ART is science—in the flesh.

Genius, in art, consists in knowing how far we may go too far.

There is a house, a lamp, a plate of soup, a fire, wine and pipes at the back of every important work of art.

Instinct, in art, needs to be trained by method; but instinct alone helps us to dis¬ cover a method which will suit us, and thanks to which our instinct may be trained.

In feeling his way, an artist may open a secret door and never discover that, be¬ hind that door, a whole world lies concealed.

When a work of art appears to be in advance of its period, it is really the period that has lagged behind the work of art.

There is a moment when every work, in the process of being created, benefits from the glamour attaching to uncompleted work. “Don’t touch it any more!” cries the amateur. It is then that the true artist takes his chance.

Sculpture, so neglected on account of the current contempt for form and mass, is one of the noblest arts. To begin with, it is the only one which obliges us to move round it.

“Look,” said a lady to her husband in front of one of Claude Monet’s paintings of a cathedral. “It looks like melting ice¬ cream.” In this particular case the lady spoke the truth, but she had not acquired the right to do so.

The artist must always be partly man and partly woman. Unfortunately the woman part is almost always unbearable.

Every masterpiece having once been in the fashion goes out of fashion, and, long afterwards, finds an everlasting equilibrium. Generally it is when it is out of fashion that a masterpiece appeals to the public.

Music—Good and Bad

The musician opens the cage-door to arithmetic; the draughtsman gives geometry its freedom.

Beethoven is irksome in his developments, but not Bach, because Beethoven develops the form and Bach the idea.

The bad music, which superior folk despise, is agreeable enough. What is really intolerable is what they think good music.

Wagner's works are long works which are not only long, but long-drawn-out, be¬ cause this old sorcerer looked upon boredom as a useful drug for the stupefaction of the faithful. It is the same with mesmerists who hypnotize in public. The genuine "pass" which puts the subject to sleep is usually very short and simple, but they accompany it with a score of sham passes which impress the crowd. The crowd is won by lies; it is deceived by the truth, which is too simple, and not sufficiently shocking.

The public is shocked at the charming absurdity of Erik Satie's titles and system of notation, but respects the ponderous absurdity of the libretto of Parsifal.

Satie does not pay much attention to painters, and does not read the poets, but he likes to live where life ferments; he has a flair for good inns. Debussy established, once for all, the Debussy atmosphere. Satie evolves. Each of his works, intimately connected with its predecessor, is, nevertheless, distinct and lives a life of its own. They are like a new kind of pudding, a surprise and a deception for those who expect one always to keep on treading the same piece of ground. Satie teaches what, in our age, is the greatest audacity— simplicity.

Nothing is so enervating as to lie and soak for a long time in a warm bath. Enough of music in which one lies and soaks. Enough of clouds, waves, aquariums, water-sprites, and nocturnal scents; what we need is a music of the earth, every-day music. Enough of hammocks, garlands, and gondolas; I want some one to build me music I can live in, like a house. Music is not all the time a gondola, or a race¬ horse, or a tight-rope. It is sometimes a chair as well.

We may soon hope for an orchestra where there will be no caressing strings. Only a rich choir of wood, brass and percussion.

All good music resembles something. Good music arouses emotion owing to its mysterious resemblance to the objects and feelings which have motivated it.

Pelleas is an example of music to be listened to with one's face in one's hands. All music which has to be listened to through the hands is suspect. Wagner is typically music which is listened to through the hands.

Too many miracles are expected of us; I consider myself very fortunate if I have been able to make a blind man hear.

Playing with Boy Toys by Ani Gavani

[**Montreal**] Boys are by their very nature exhibitionists. They have a penis and testicles hanging outside of their bodies which they like to show off. Some boys even let girls play with their 'family jewels.' This makes them the girl's *Boy Toys* ….

I have several men friends who have agreed to be my *Boy Toys*. They have asked me to play with them. They are not my boyfriends … for I do not favour them with intimacy. They are just men who let me play with their penis and testicles.

To be a true *Boy Toy* they have to let the girl decide what to do with them. When they come to visit and we play … all I promise them is that they will ejaculate. But I keep them wondering how ... and how long it will take. The longer the better!

No I am not their Mistress, commanding them to do humiliating things. I do dress up for them when I spend time with them in lacy panties and a bra, but that is just to turn them on … as I play with them. You do know that the brain is a sexual organ too! I admit to you that I am a confessed nymphomaniac and that I like to do many different things to satisfy my sexual appetite.

One *Boy Toy* game we play is to delay their ejaculation as long as possible … then making then spout like an over pressured fountain. This is fun for both them and for me! We play several different varieties of this 'Suspense Sport.'

Short of lopping their appendages off … some of my *Boy Toys* even let me cuckold them.

Do you know what cuckolding is? Cuckolding is when you transform a rooster into a hen. When a boy fears they will be castrated they get very erect and they ejaculate as if it was their last time. My *Boy Toys* seem to find this pleasurable!

There are several Cuckolding games. One Cuckolding game is played with a short piece of cord tied up as a hangman's noose.

The string should be made of nylons so that it can be easily be opened and closed and not pinch the sensitive skin of his penis and scrotum.

You can tie him to a chair and blindfold him. Don't tell him what you will do but do make sure you have a 'safe word,' so you know when he wants you to stop.

You can play this as if it is a 'Pleasure and Pain' game. If you have a feather or a soft paint brush in one hand and the noose is in your other hand … you get the picture. There are many ways of playing this emasculation game. One way is to tie the noose around his scrotum and pull tightly.

Make sure you keep track of which side to pull to loosen the noose … otherwise you will need some scissors to cut the noose off him in an emergency.

Now whisper into his ear that he is to be transformed from rooster to a hen and then stand back and be astonished. It will amaze even him how big his penis will grow and how much his testicles will tingle. It might even triple in length from flaccid to fully erect!

If you also tickle him with the paint brush or feather you will see him start to drip with anticipation. If you tickle him too much he may pop so watch out.

Only leave the noose on a few minutes or his scrotum will start to change colour from pink to blue. If you tighten the noose, let him sit for a few minutes, loosen the noose for a few minutes then tighten it again you might start to drive him crazy. If you do that over and over a dozen times he will beg you to let him pop!

If you want to drive him to crazy tell him you will leave him like that for the afternoon. Then leave the room and watch him struggle in frustration to free himself from his predicament … talking about psychological torture!

Another thing you can do is just noose his penis and leave his scrotum alone. You can also set the noose so that it is around both his penis and his scrotum.

You can also tie the noose around one of his testicles and pull.

This type of play may produce an immediate response from your *Boy Toy*. Don’t be surprised if he suddenly ejaculated.

Don’t pull too tightly or you may damage the artery and sperm duct to that testicle.

Another bit of fun is when you snag both his scrotum and penis and draw the pack back through his legs. Then he starts to look like a eunuch.

If you want to tease him slowly tie a cup to the noose then get him to stand as you toss nickels, dime, quarters, loonies and toonies into the cup.

As the cup gets heavier and heavier … he will tell you that the jingle, jangle needs to end!

Surrealist and Dada Poetry

Green Indifference

Grey lively the …
Now us bare but the colours.
For are;
Quiet gets high will.
And … soon upon lay and from dead but from;
… the of the feet the and until sadness.
By they solemn where nests leaves.
We many cold returns turn *green indifference*.
Shall autumnal fall branches;
Empty green at certain.
Spy there white soon our abandoned summer verdant for fall are months descends tree.
Had the … the of now verdant and.
Blue colours lifeless flakes.
Are to sure lay.
… be.
Earth bright once far chirped autumn the;
Displaced happily scatter will is life a of.
Then will sky when blanket

Original Poem: Until the Verdant Green Returns by Patrick

There is a certain sadness
when fall descends upon us
and the verdant green of summer

gets displaced by the solemn colours of autumn

Sure autumnal colours are bright …
but they are far from lively
for the leaves are now dead
and lay scatter lifeless at our feet.

Soon the tree branches will be bare
and we shall spy the empty nests
where life had once chirped happily
but now lay quiet and abandoned.

Soon the blue sky will turn grey
then white … from high will fall
flakes of cold indifference to blanket
the Earth for many months …

until the verdant green returns.

Fullness Comes I …

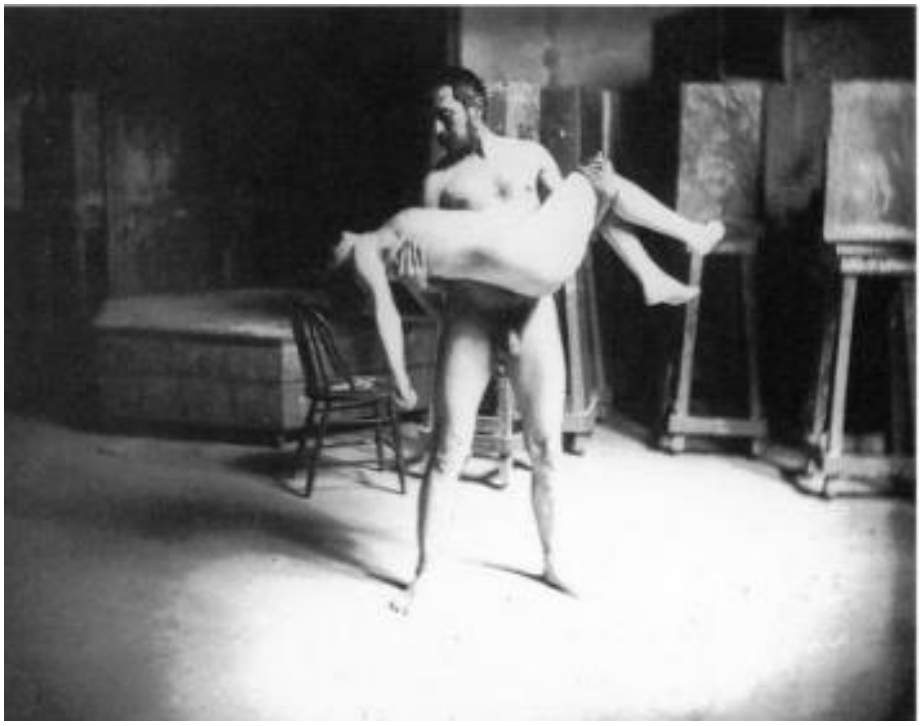
Was want savour knew.
So eyes much be how and was two.
I hand;
To I me up more it and her of by smiled what doubt it may sweetness any would knew.
Mine like not.
Me me took well;
Fullness comes I …
Her sure.
Now to smiled unwrap could here touch.
Back for was could in I upon the;
She love it.
Nor the for I electric.
To this liked its looked.
Life let stop someone be ah be I see now shining it wanted but was.
It knew surprise who she herself there of how I.
What

Original poem: Unwrap me, savour the sweetness of life by Patrick

It was the touch electric, her
hand upon mine. I looked
up to see two shining eyes, sure
of herself, she smiled. This took
me by surprise, for I knew she

liked me, but how much, now
I knew it was more like love, be
may what it comes, now how
could there be any doubt, here
was someone who wanted to
unwrap me, and savour
the sweetness of life in its
fullness, so I smiled back.
Ah well, I could not stop her
nor would I want to. For I
knew what it was, and let it be

Pictorial: Eakins Holding a Female Model …



This is one of the photographs that got him into trouble …

Photography

An Intimate Afternoon by Rose Lang

[**Paris**] One afternoon recently my friend Zoe asked me to take some pictorials of her. We were visiting the Cote d'Azur on a spring vacation.

She had just broken up with her boyfriend and felt a bit dejected. She needed some cheering up. It was my idea to get her to sit for pictorials. It was her idea to share these intimate pictorials with the world.

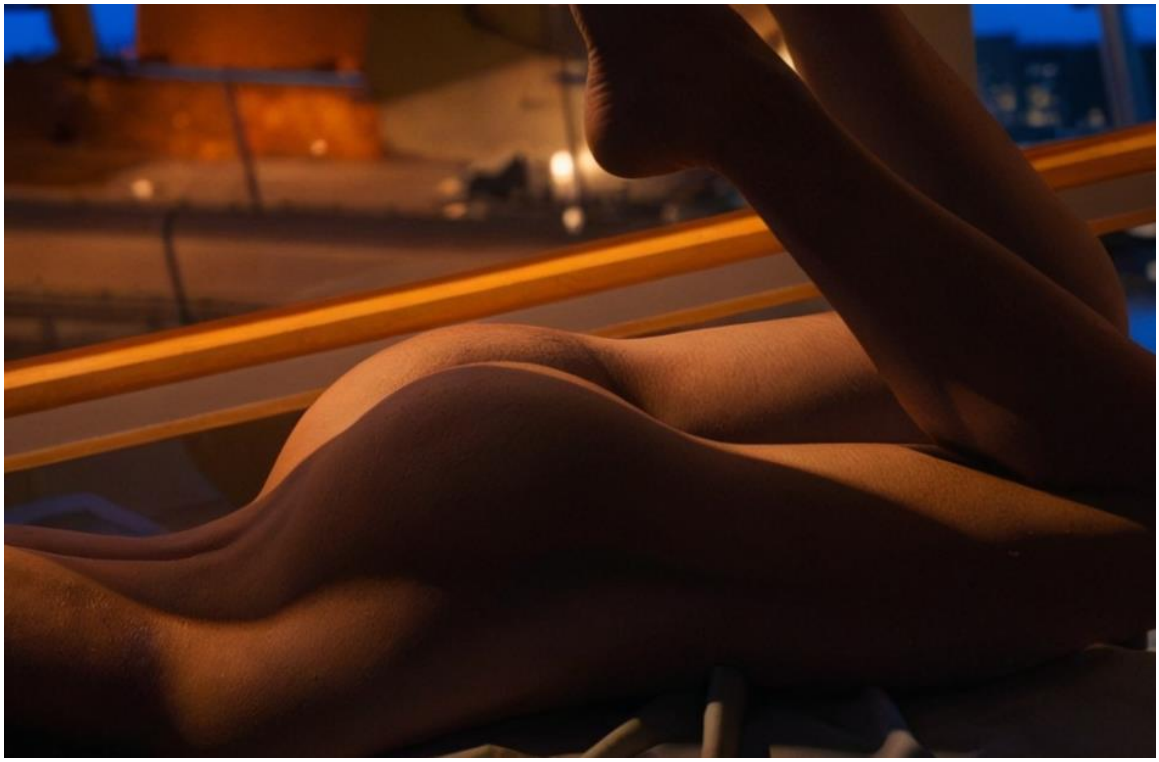
She is a bit shy so she hide away her face.

Zoe has a beautiful figure. She has broad hips and beautiful breasts.

You might notice she does not have a gram of fat on her, except where she should … she eats well and leads a very healthy lifestyle.

Lucky her!

She wanted me to take a close up of her bottom …



Supposedly her ex made fun of her backside and gave it a silly name. The thing is he never ever saw her naked … while you have.

Lucky You!

Then she flipped over. Zoe spread her legs. We took one last pictorial of her!

Then we put away the camera, got all dressed up and went out and danced the night away. It was two in the morning before we were back in our hotel room and fast asleep … In the middle of the night I could hear Zoe *Jilling Out*.

A Model and Some Drawings of him by Ani Vagani

[**Montreal**] Here are some pictorials and drawings that go with them.

A male model sitting on a podium. The artist was a woman. He is not aroused.

It is strange but the male model is rendered as a eunuch! Is this subconscious?

This is by the same artist who was asked to do a second drawing. She's not quite there. There is the marble sack but no … you know what. She could not bring herself to draw his naughty bit …

This drawing is by a skilled artist.

You can see his musculature in the sketch.

And here is the drawing.

You can see the proportions are all correct (he needs to tuck in his stomach).

This drawing was done by a male sculptor. All the other drawimgs were done by female artists.

Pictorial: Two Lesbians at a Mirror by Fuseli (1810)

Popcorn

{Popcorn: Popular + Corny …}

It's called 'Banksying …' by Charles Trepany

[**New York**] Look out, daters! There's a new toxic relationship taking the romantic world by storm.

It's called "*Banksying*." and it derives its name from the elusive street artist *Banksy*, known for art that seems to pop up out of nowhere and often comes with a cryptic twist.

Like a baffling *Banksy* art piece, "*Banksying*" in a relationship involves slowly withdrawing emotionally from your partner, without telling them that's what you're doing. When the time comes to finally break up, the "*Banksy*-er" often feels better, having mentally checked out of the relationship long ago, while the other partner is left blindsided and confused.

When someone "*Banksies*," they start to destroy the relationship before the other person sees it coming. Some of *Banksy's* art has famously self-destructed − like one painting that made headlines for shredding itself after selling at an auction for $ 1.4 million.

Amy Chan [a dating consultant] says "*Banskying*" has been happening for a while − it just has a trendy name now. The solution, she says, is to practice open and honest communication, even when doing so feels uncomfortable.

"*'Banksying'* happens more now, especially with the proliferation of dating apps, where people have developed poor dating etiquette," Chan says. "The person withdrawing gets the ability to process the breakup on their own terms,

before they hand the memo to the other person who ends up being in total shock. It's selfish. It shows a lack of emotional maturity and a way of dealing with conflict that is rooted in avoidance."

Where does '*Banksying'* Come From?

Emma Hathorn, a relationship expert … says "*Banksying*" leaves daters feeling stressed, confused and gaslit. Often the person on the receiving end can sense something is wrong, but their partner keeps assuring them everything is fine.

"*Banksying* is something that we have all experienced at one point or another," Hathorn says. "Previously, there hasn't been a way to express that subtle feeling of dread when a partner has begun to pull away, essentially icing us out. Emotionally manipulative, emotionally distant – there are plenty of ways that people have tried to define it."

What makes "*Banksying*" so painful, Chan says, is its ambiguity. At least when someone ghosts, it's clear they've abandoned the relationship. With "*Banksying*," however, people are often left in the dark, wondering if the relationship is actually solid or if their concerns about it are justified.

"They might not be using their words to tell you – but their actions are," Chan says. "They might lie and say everything is 'fine' but you also have to exert that you're not 'fine' because you can pick up the cues of emotional distance. Don't gaslight yourself into thinking it's OK to sweep the cold behavior under

the rug just because they’re saying everything is fine, but acting in a way that’s completely the opposite."

What does *'Banksying'* say about us?

Ultimately, the prevalence of "*Banksying*" further shows how the skills of dating − as well as the skills of breaking up − have degraded in recent years.

It does highlight how conflict-avoidant people have become," Chan says. "It seems like there’s less of an ability to tolerate uncomfortable emotions and hard conversations, so instead of dealing with the relationship challenges, or feeling the guilt of a breakup, people end up causing more harm by dragging things out."

The solution? Instead of *Banksying*, tell the person you're dating how you really feel. It's not the easy thing to do, but it is the right thing to do.

"Modern dating is in desperate need of blunt honesty," Hathorn says. "Being upfront, firm but polite shows that you know what you want and are unwilling to waste your time and a potential partner’s time."

Fetish by Sigmund Freud

[**Vienna, 1927**] In the last few years I have had an opportunity of studying analytically a number of men whose object-choice was dominated by a fetish. There is no need to expect that these people came to analysis on account of their fetish. For though no doubt a fetish is recognized by its adherents as an abnormality, it is seldom felt by them as the symptom of an ailment accompanied by suffering. Usually they are quite satisfied with it, or even praise the way in which it eases their erotic life. As a rule, therefore, the fetish made its appearance in analysis as a subsidiary finding.

For obvious reasons the details of these cases must be withheld from publication; I cannot, therefore, show in what way accidental circumstances have contributed to the choice of a fetish. The most extraordinary case seemed to me to be one in which a young man had exalted a certain sort of 'shine on the nose' into a fetishistic precondition. The surprising explanation of this was that the patient had been brought up in an English nursery but had later come to Germany, where he forgot his mother-tongue almost completely. The fetish, which originated from his earliest childhood, had to be understood in English, not German. The 'shine on the nose' - was in reality a 'glance at the nose'. The nose was thus the fetish, which, incidentally, he endowed at will with the luminous shine which was not perceptible to others.

In every instance, the meaning and the purpose of the fetish turned out, in analysis, to be the same. It revealed itself so naturally and seemed to me so compelling that I am prepared to expect the same solution in all cases of fetishism. When now I announce that the fetish is a substitute for the penis, I

shall certainly create disappointment; so I hasten to add that it is not a substitute for any chance penis, but for a particular and quite special penis that had been extremely important in early childhood but had later been lost. That is to say, it should normally have been given up, but the fetish is precisely designed to preserve it from extinction. To put it more plainly: the fetish is a substitute for the woman's (the mother's) penis that the little boy once believed in and - for reasons familiar to us - does not want to give up.

What happened, therefore, was that the boy refused to take cognizance of the fact of his having perceived that a woman does not possess a penis. No, that could not be true: for if a woman had been castrated, then his own possession of a penis was in danger; and against that there rose in rebellion the portion of his narcissism which Nature has, as a precaution, attached to that particular organ. In later life a grown man may perhaps experience a similar panic when the cry goes up that Throne and Altar are in danger, and similar illogical consequences will ensue. If I am not mistaken, Laforgue would say in this case that the boy 'scotomizes' his perception of the woman's lack of a penis.1 A new technical term is justified when it describes a new fact or emphasizes it. This is not so here. The oldest word in our psycho-analytic terminology, 'repression', already relates to this pathological process. If we wanted to differentiate more sharply between the vicissitude of the idea as distinct from that of the affect, and reserve the word 'Verdrängung' ['repression'] for the affect, then the correct German word for the vicissitude of the idea would be 'Verleugnung' ['disavowal']. 'Scotomization' seems to me particularly unsuitable, for it suggests that the perception is entirely wiped out, so that the result is the same as when a visual impression falls on the blind spot in the retina. In the situation we are considering, on the contrary, we see that the

perception has persisted, and that a very energetic action has been undertaken to maintain the disavowal. It is not true that, after the child has made his observation of the woman, he has preserved unaltered his belief that women have a phallus. He has retained that belief, but he has also given it up. In the conflict between the weight of the unwelcome perception and the force of his counter-wish, a compromise has been reached, as is only possible under the dominance of the unconscious laws of thought - the primary processes. Yes, in his mind the woman has got a penis, in spite of everything; but this penis is no longer the same as it was before. Something else has taken its place, has been appointed its substitute, as it were, and now inherits the interest which was formerly directed to its predecessor. But this interest suffers an extraordinary increase as well, because the horror of castration has set up a memorial to itself in the creation of this substitute. Furthermore, an aversion, which is never absent in any fetishist, to the real female genitals remains a stigma indelebile of the repression that has taken place. We can now see what the fetish achieves and what it is that maintains it. It remains a token of triumph over the threat of castration and a protection against it. It also saves the fetishist from becoming a homosexual, by endowing women with the characteristic which makes them tolerable as sexual objects. In later life, the fetishist feels that he enjoys yet another advantage from his substitute for a genital. The meaning of the fetish is not known to other people, so the fetish is not withheld from him: it is easily accessible and he can readily obtain the sexual satisfaction attached to it. What other men have to woo and make exertions for can be had by the fetishist with no trouble at all.

Probably no male human being is spared the fright of castration at the sight of a female genital. Why some people become homosexual as a consequence of

that impression, while others fend it off by creating a fetish, and the great majority surmount it, we are frankly not able to explain. It is possible that, among all the factors at work, we do not yet know those which are decisive for the rare pathological results. We must be content if we can explain what has happened, and may for the present leave on one side the task of explaining why something has not happened.

One would expect that the organs or objects chosen as substitutes for the absent female phallus would be such as appear as symbols of the penis in other connections as well. This may happen often enough, but is certainly not a deciding factor. It seems rather that when the fetish is instituted some process occurs which reminds one of the stopping of memory in traumatic amnesia. As in this latter case, the subject's interest comes to a halt half-way, as it were; it is as though the last impression before the uncanny and traumatic one is retained as a fetish. Thus the foot or shoe owes its preference as a fetish - or a part of it - to the circumstance that the inquisitive boy peered at the woman's genitals from below, from her legs up; fur and velvet - as has long been suspected - are a fixation of the sight of the pubic hair, which should have been followed by the longed-for sight of the female member; pieces of underclothing, which are so often chosen as a fetish, crystallize the moment of undressing, the last moment in which the woman could still be regarded as phallic. But I do not maintain that it is invariably possible to discover with certainty how the fetish was determined.

An investigation of fetishism is strongly recommended to any one who still doubts the existence of the castration complex or who can still believe that

fright at the sight of the female genital has some other ground - for instance, that it is derived from a supposed recollection of the trauma of birth.

For me, the explanation of fetishism had another point of theoretical interest as well. Recently, along quite speculative lines, I arrived at the proposition that the essential difference between neurosis and psychosis was that in the former the ego, in the service of reality, suppresses a piece of the id1, whereas in a psychosis it lets itself be induced by the id to detach itself from a piece of reality. I returned to this theme once again later on. But soon after this I had reason to regret that I had ventured so far. In the analysis of two young men I learned that each - one when he was two years old and the other when he was ten - had failed to take cognizance of the death of his beloved father - had 'scotomized' it - and yet neither of them had developed a psychosis. Thus a piece of reality which was undoubtedly important had been disavowed by the ego, just as the unwelcome fact of women's castration is disavowed in fetishists. I also began to suspect that similar occurrences in childhood are by no means rare, and I believed that I had been guilty of an error in my characterization of neurosis and psychosis. It is true that there was one way out of the difficulty. My formula needed only to hold good where there was a higher degree of differentiation in the psychical apparatus; things might be permissible to a child which would entail severe injury to an adult.

But further research led to another solution of the contradiction. It turned out that the two young men had no more 'scotomized' their father's death than a fetishist does the castration of women. It was only one current in their mental life that had not recognized their father's death; there was another current which took full account of that fact. The attitude which fitted in with the wish

and the attitude which fitted in with reality existed side by side. In one of my two cases this split had formed the basis of a moderately severe obsessional neurosis. The patient oscillated in every situation in life between two assumptions: the one, that his father was still alive and was hindering his activities; the other, opposite one, that he was entitled to regard himself as his father's successor. I may thus keep to the expectation that in a psychosis the one current - that which fitted in with reality - would have in fact been absent.

Returning to my description of fetishism, I may say that there are many and weighty additional proofs of the divided attitude of fetishists to the question of the castration of women. In very subtle instances both the disavowal and the affirmation of the castration have found their way into the construction of the fetish itself. This was so in the case of a man whose fetish was an athletic support-belt which could also be worn as bathing drawers. This piece of clothing covered up the genitals entirely and concealed the distinction between them. Analysis showed that it signified that women were castrated and that they were not castrated; and it also allowed of the hypothesis that men were castrated, for all these possibilities could equally well be concealed under the belt - the earliest rudiment of which in his childhood had been the fig-leaf on a statue. A fetish of this sort, doubly derived from contrary ideas, is of course especially durable. In other instances the divided attitude shows itself in what the fetishist does with his fetish, whether in reality or in his imagination. To point out that he reveres his fetish is not the whole story; in many cases he treats it in a way which is obviously equivalent to a representation of castration. This happens particularly if he has developed a strong identification with his father and plays the part of the latter; for it is to him that as a child he ascribed the woman's castration. Affection and hostility

in the treatment of the fetish - which run parallel with the disavowal and the acknowledgement of castration - are mixed in unequal proportions in different cases, so that the one or the other is more clearly recognizable. We seem here to approach an understanding, even if a distant one, of the behaviour of the 'coupeur de nattes'. In him the need to carry out the castration which he disavows has come to the front. His action contains in itself the two mutually incompatible assertions: 'the woman has still got a penis' and 'my father has castrated the woman'. Another variant which is also a parallel to fetishism in social psychology, might be seen in the Chinese custom of mutilating the female foot and then revering it like a fetish after it has been mutilated. It seems as though the Chinese male wants to thank the woman for having submitted to being castrated.

In conclusion, we may say that the normal prototype of fetishes is a man's penis, just as the normal prototype of *inferior organs* is a woman's real small penis, the clitoris

In Freud's Case: Mothering the Phallus by Carellin Brooks

> *What happened, therefore, was that the boy refused to take cognizance of the fact of his having perceived that a woman does not possess a penis. No, that could not be true: for if a woman had been castrated, then his own possession of a penis was in danger ... it is as though the last impression before the uncanny and traumatic one is retained as a fetish. Thus the foot or shoe owes its preference as a fetish — or a part of it — to the circumstance that — the inquisitive boy peered at the woman's genitals from below, from her legs up; fur and velvet — as has long been suspected — are a fixation of the sight of the pubic hair, which should have been followed by the longed-for sight of the female member! — Sigmund Freud, 'Fetishism'*

Freud … in the above quote he seems to be speaking about all women, is in fact talking of only one: the mother. His slide, and mine, from mother to all women underlies my subsequent investigations of the phallic woman.

The phallic mother who first appears in the Freudian text reverses the particulars of ghostly presence. She is the ostensibly present absence, the cipher, the figure who is never actually there. Here, in this story of origin, is where the phallic mother is first revealed and simultaneously created, the answer to all the dreams of the boy child and the dualistically equipped solution to his every need.

Note that, as Freud conceives her, the phallic mother bears no relation to the actual mother, except as a symbol, a stand-in, or a hallucination, and this only

in the mind of the little boy who sees and, in seeing, conjures her. She is not real, and Freud, indeed, never claims her as such. What he does claim is that she is necessary, not to herself but to the child who needs her hallucinatory completeness to ensure his own.

The phallic mother, in the Freudian conception of things, is created for this one purpose: to satisfy the child's requirement that he feel safe as to the fate of his penis. If the Oedipus complex, the mechanism by which the male child wishes to possess his mother and kill his father, leads to a corresponding doubling back and subsequent fear, that the father will instead kill him and/or take his penis away, then the phallic mother allays such terrors. If she has the phallus, too, then the proof - that the penis could be taken away, as shown by the female example, where it is undeniably absent — is missing. If there is no proof, there is no threat; and if there is no threat, there is no coming into play of the *Castration Complex*. This postponement is the phallic mother's sole function.

But if such utilitarianism is clear-cut, it in no way lessens the dramatic potential of the phallic mother's appearance. Here she is, in her fantastic, phantasmic boudoir, ever-mysterious and (surely not by chance) ever-silent. This is in a very real sense the beginning of the child's separation into self, a beginning already tainted, in the Freudian story of origins, by the loss to come. And if my rendition of this originating motif begins to resemble a dramatic scene, it is only because Freud himself sets it up that way. His characterization of the child, his description of the mother, and his explanation of the fetish are all emotively charged. Each facet of the scene compels our investment in this fictionalized glimpse into the little boy's world, in what is one of the most

imaginatively realized of Freud's explanations and the one to stray furthest into the territories of fiction itself.

The passage describing the phallic mother and the child's necessity also displays Freud's style, notable as much for what it does not say as for what it does. The Freudian text is alternatively discursive and, occasionally, curt. Take his first, flat denial: 'No, that could not be true.' The abrupt, blunt negative serves not just to articulate the reason for his refusal but also to transport readers into the mind of the main character of the passage: the boy. The other hallmarks of the Freudian text are here, too, in force: the conversational tone ('What happened, therefore'); the unspecified ascription of meaning to readers, other theorists, or perhaps Freud himself ('as has long been suspected'); the polite hesitation in reaching a theoretical conclusion ('It is as though'). But the most striking factor of the passage is its immediate immersion in the boy's world, its unacknowledged and sudden entry into his point of view. Here we are, in that most feminine of places, the boudoir. The boy, the hero of this story, is there too, seated at his mother's feet in her dressing-room. Freud's identification, his ready sympathy, is with the child, and his powers of description are marshalled to that end. Mother - that distant, silent, beautiful creature — is dressing. With the whole panoply of an artificial femininity before her, she picks and chooses what she will draw upon. She paints and powders; she puts on sequins, stockings, feathers, jewels — all manner of exquisite finery. The boy's eye is dazzled by this display and he looks upwards in awe. As his eye nears that un-nameable place, that conglomeration of darkness at the point that joins his mother's thighs, he realizes the awful, *unheimlich* truth: Mother has no phallus.

Here then is the fate that awaits him, senses the child. Here, as he unconsciously works it out, is the ultimate proof of the father's power: the mother's absent penis. This must mean the father has castrated someone already, and someone as powerful as his mother! Surely the child will be next, for the father must know that he dares to desire her and wants to kill him, the rival for her love. The little boy's terror leads to his blunt, desperate, unconsciously theorized refusal: not of the father's power, but of the mother's newly perceived lack. Recall Freud's language: the child, in a complex series of textual negatives, 'refused to take cognizance of the fact of his having perceived that a woman does not possess a penis.' This might at first appear to be an unnecessarily finicky way of phrasing the process; but the precise description is necessary, for it sets out the child's double step, his recognition and not-recognition. And it accurately summarizes the defensive act that Freud calls disavowal: the do-see/don't-see that is symbolized, for the minority of boys who choose this way out, by the memorial object, the fetish.

For there is a way by which the child can avoid his new and dangerous understanding. There is a way, Freud swiftly reassures (the reader? the boy?), for the child to arrest that perilous journey upwards to the place of knowledge. It involves a stand-in, a distraction, a replacement. The boy has only to seize upon anything that catches and holds his eye in the course of that fateful trip. Stockings, high-heeled shoes, even a fox stole flung carelessly over the shoulders and dangling to the hip. Thus does the frightened child find his escape? He becomes a fetishist. And the fetish, for Freud, has only one purpose: to stand in for that literally unthinkable lack of the mother, her absent phallus.

How does the fetish come to stand in for this particular imaginary bodily part, this created absence? To explain this, Freud offers a theory by which the fetishist can both see and deny his mother's non-phallic state. Recall that 'the boy refused to take cognizance of the fact of his having perceived that a woman does not possess a penis.' As Freud states it, he did not allow ('refused') himself to recognize ('take cognizance of') the knowledge that he already had: 'that a woman does not possess a penis.' The time element is important here: it is not that the boy performs these several functions simultaneously but that, when the perceived threat to his own organ is at its height, he then both remembers and refuses the memory of what he has seen — the mother's genitals. Freud dubs this process 'disavowal' and ex-plains how, under its influence, the child both maintains his belief in his mother's phallus and renounces it, taking as a symbol for that paradox of possession and lack the substitute penis — the fetish.

The mechanism by which the ego deals with a threat to its coherence is bold enough: by both holding onto the desired belief (Mother's phallus) and recognizing its loss (Mother's phallic absence), the breakdown of a belief system and the consequent chaos that would ensue are avoided. Though the second term ('the truth') is primary, it is the first that is more fiercely held in the face of the tension between the two incompatible states. This disavowal — a simultaneous recognition and refusal characterized by repression and the defensive splitting of the ego — is a key concept in explaining the presence of the phallic woman. In Freudian terms, that which is dis-avowed is always, paradoxically, most perniciously present; that which is most energetically repudiated is that which will come back again and again. Disavowal is, moreover, an important concept in terms of its function within the formal

workings of the Freudian text. Many of Freud's most fruitful textual conundrums display the workings of an embodied disavowal that is all the more persistent for being ignored. This, in turn, is a clue to disavowal's paradoxical dual quality, the way in which, exemplified by the penile female, it is both there and not there, both accepted and fervently denied. Disavowal thus works not just as a mechanism in the child's location of his phallic mother, or the man's reaction to the real female genitals (discussed below), but, rather, as a process within the Freudian text itself. The process as opposed to the formal schematization of disavowal can in this light be located in a number of disparate, pertinent places: in the little girl's attitude to her absent penis, say, or in the Freudian text's treatment of the clitoris. It is even the mechanism, in 'Fetishism' and other texts, whereby the real female genitals inspire the average man with horror. And it is disavowal, in its most important function, that will remain the primary defence of the male — child or adult - who cannot adjust to the shattering realization that his mother's (and, consequently, other women's) penis does not exist and that, by extension, the fate of his own is very possibly in jeopardy.

The text of 'Fetishism' is concerned with the particular mechanism of disavowal in the case of the male fetishist? — his substitution of the fetish object for the unpalatable fact of his mother's so-called castration — but it is impossible, while tracking the appearance of the phallic mother, to ignore Freud's total investment in the child's dilemma. His identification, in fact, follows through to his characterization of the adult fetishist, someone who feels he has solved the problem of heterosexual relations: 'What other men have to woo and make exertions for [i.e., the sexual objective] can be had by the fetishist with no trouble at all' (p. 154). It is impossible to tell whether

Freud is being approving or gently ironic here: whether he shares the fetishist's presumed smugness or mocks it. The fetishist, as Freud has al-ready explained, does not feel the need for treatment for his condition: his fetish is revealed only incidentally, when he seeks analysis for some other reason entirely. It is Freud himself, in fact, who is concerned with the fetishist's strategy, and it is he who reveals his theory of that strategy with something of a rhetorical flourish, and something also of his own small disavowal: 'When now I announce that the fetish is a substitute for the penis, I shall certainly create disappointment' (152). He continues: 'so I hasten to add that it is not a substitute for any chance penis, but for a particular and quite special penis that had been extremely important in early childhood but had later been lost ... To put it more plainly: the fetish is a substitute for the woman's (the mother's) penis that the little boy once believed in and — for reasons familiar to us — does not want to give up' (152- 53). Freud's remarkable coyness here — a coyness that later theorists, most notably Judith Butler in 'The Lesbian Phallus,' have picked up on and amplified — is, I believe, not simply and incidentally playful but, on the contrary, crucial to the whole complex of associations around the female phallus, which is seen first in his writing and then in subsequent texts on the topic. Freud's very sentences, here, become comparatively arch; his drawing-out of his conclusion, once, twice, and so on, speaks not simply to theoretical revelation but to outright teasing. The choice of wording that Freud uses to draw the reader into accepting his claim; the air of mild secretiveness that accrues to the 'particular,' 'quite special,' and not yet sited penis; the final revelation that is almost a confession, as if Freud has suddenly given in to our importunate demands; and the charming deflection of our somehow self-evident (yet quite unsupported) disappointment: all these contribute to the privileged sensation of being let in on a secret that makes

‘Fetishism’ read as personal rather than as theoretical. And then there is Freud’s final projection, the mechanism whereby he implicates the reader — ‘for reasons familiar to us.’ His reader is a privileged colleague now, familiar with his theories, understanding his digressions, wooed and caught.

The phallus, as Lacan and many subsequent theorists have noted, retains its power most effectively when at least partially obscured: ‘*il ne peut jouer son réle que voilé*’ (‘Signification,’ 692). In the Freudian text of ‘Fetishism,’ we see the textual dance of, if not the seven veils, at least the crucial one. Freud’s delayed unveiling of the phallus for which the fetish is meant to stand in, his textual advance and retreat, certainly behaves as if this were so. And his opening remark, addressing a perceived position in the reader, takes it for granted that his unveiling strips the phallus — now exposed and thus divested of its allure — and, in doing so, lets down our expectations as readers. So he offers us redress, at least at the level of the game into which his text invites us: the penis is not just any penis, he will ‘hasten’ to assure us (doing his best, now, to satisfy), but the particular, special, imaginary penis of the mother - a real object, standing in for an imagined one, onto which, in turn, the adult’s sexual urges are projected; it’s quite a series of substitutions. And Freud, while prepared to acknowledge the phallus’s dis-appointing imagined reality, does not touch on this aspect of his theory: the number of reidentifications his fetishist must process in order to retain his satisfaction.

Otherwise, Freud’s generally authoritative tone hardly flags at all, extend-ing even to his matter-of-fact admission of inexplicability: ‘Probably no male human being is spared the fright of castration at the sight of a female genital. Why some people become homosexual as a consequence of that impression,

while others fend it off by creating a fetish, and the great majority surmount it, we are frankly not able to explain' (XXI: 154). Freud's playfulness, employed to such striking effect in his discussion of the phallus, is far less in evidence here; instead, we are suddenly discussing important, universal issues, with a tone of seriousness to match. There's his nod to an omnipresent male horror of women's real genitals ('no male human being is spared') and his simultaneously contradictory textual hedging (that fraught, hesitant 'Probably'). Such statements are symptomatic of more than his assumption of authority: they hint at the malaise that grips the Freudian text when it must deal, not with imaginary women, but with real ones. Suddenly, Freud is out of the boudoir, with its soft textures and convenient objects onto which a fetish may be, in time of need, fixed. Here, instead of the phallic mother, we have the real woman: present, messy, incontrovertibly real. This movement, from imaginary maternal amplitude to real female lack, is a crucial one for Freud and for my study of the phallic woman. The phallic mother, and by extension all women's imaginary phallic pos-session, reassures the child (the man?); the real woman, equipped with real female genitals, terrifies him. And Freud's own hesitations, here and through-out the text, explain why the phallic mother is so compelling not just to the child evoked in the text but also to Freud as writer: because of her ultimately accessible, imaginary wholeness, because of the ways in which she is not female at all but, as Gallop (below) so quickly grasps, a fraud — merely fantastic, dismissably unreal.

The phallic mother, as figure, has her limitations. The phallic woman does not. In my investigation I take Freud's idea of this imaginary mother — in this specific location and dramatized in this particular scene — and transfer it, in the same way the child does, to-woman as a general category. In using Freud's

phallic mother as an originating figure, I want to look at how women have inhabited that imaginary space: the blank, where the mother is. In a sense, with Ian, I want to argue that the phallic mother ‘does not refer to women or to mothers’; rather, it concentrates on the relation of the phallus to the feminine in the field of desire, a relation that I, in investigating it, wish to ultimately explode.

Trained Rats Help to Clear Landmines in Cambodia

Mott Sreymom, 34, a rat handler with the humanitarian demining organization APOPO, carries an African giant pouched rat back from a landmine field in Siem Reap, Cambodia, Tuesday, June 10, 2025. (AP Photo/Anton L. Delgado) The Associated Press

[**Cambodia**] (*The Associated Press*) — Rats may send some squealing, but in Cambodia, teams of the not-so-little critters have become indispensable in helping specialists detect land mines that have killed and maimed thousands in the Southeast Asian country. The African giant pouched rats, which can grow up to 45 centimeters (around 18 inches) and weigh up to 1.5 kilograms (more than 3 pounds), are on the front line, making their way nimbly across

fields to signal to their handlers when they get a whiff of TNT, used in most land mines and explosive ordnance . “While working with these rats, I have always found mines and they have never skipped a single one,” said Mott Sreymom, a rat handler at APOPO, a humanitarian demining group that trains and deploys rodent detection teams across the world. “I really trust these mine detection rats," Mott told The Associated Press while on her lunch break after working on a land mine field in the province of Siem Reap. After three decades of conflict in the previous century, remnants of war littered approximately 4,500 square kilometers (about 1,737 square miles) of Cambodian land, according to a survey by the Cambodian Mine Action and Victim Assistance Authority (CMAA) in 2004. This affected all 25 Cambodian provinces and nearly half of the country’s 14,000 villages. As of 2018, CMAA reported 1,970 square kilometers (760 square miles) remain uncleared. The rats have a keen sense of smell, making them a favorite at APOPO, which also employs land mine-detecting dog teams. “Dogs and rats are better compared to other animals because they are trainable,” said Alberto Zacarias, a field supervisor of APOPO’s technical survey dog teams, adding that they are also friendly and easily learn commands. Since demining officially began in Cambodia in 1992, more than 1.1 million mines have been cleared, as well as approximately 2.9 million other explosive remnants of war, according to a 2022 government demining progress report. And the African giant pouched rats are doing their part. “We work with them almost daily, so we get closer,” Mott said. “They are very friendly and they don’t move around and get scared. They are like family.”

Pictorial: Henri Matisse and his Model (colorized)

The Surréal

Moths and Henry Fuseli by Hannibal de Pencier

The presence of moths and butterflies in so many of the images by Fuseli is no coincidence.

Grouped under the Linnaean order *lepidoptera*, moths and butterflies fascinated Fuseli since his boyhood and remained a significant interest throughout his life, both as objects of scientific inquiry and signifiers in his work. For Fuseli, insects were inherently sublime creatures, a possibility granted by Edmund Burke's *Philosophical Enquiry*, which pointed out that

> "*there are many animals, who though far from being large, are yet capable of raising ideas of the sublime, because there are considered as objects of terror*."

For Fuseli, however, the sublimity of insects derived less from their capacity to provoke terror, than the relative impressiveness of their power. In a 1790 essay, he wrote that "the ant-hunter, the spider and the bee are surely as much nearer to man in contrivance and distinctive power than the sheep or ass, as they are farther removed from him in organization or size."

There was also something sublime about the study of entomology, the subject's vast depths of unearthed knowledge and the potential for scientific discovery. In his 1798 review of James Edward Smith's Natural History of the Rarer Lepidopterous Insects of Georgia, published in the Analytical Review, Fuseli wrote that "the discoveries of entomology approach immensity" and that an intrepid entomologist was liable to find themselves

like a “wanderer, who, invited by the overhanging woods and wide-shading luxuriance of an opposite shore, mistakes an arm of the sea for a fordable river, enters the current, and is irresistibly swept to the ocean.”

His brother, Johann Kaspar Fuessli, was an entomologist whose *Archiv der Insectengeschite*, was republished by Joseph Johnson in 1795 and translated by the younger Fuseli as Archives of Entomology, Containing the History, or Ascertaining the Characters and Classes of Insects not Hitherto Described, or Imperfectly Known, or Erroneously Classified.

Though Fuseli was an amateur, he was a highly knowledgeable one, who reviewed the scientific literature and consulted with practicing naturalists like John Francillon. His letters reveal that he regularly borrowed books and illustrated folios—such as an instance in 1792 when he asked to borrow Maria Sybilla Merian’s *Surinam Insects* from his friend and patron William Roscoe, a primary backer of the Milton Gallery and the author of such popular children’s poems as *The Butterfly’s Ball* and *The Grasshopper’s Feast*.

Fuseli’s aesthetic sensibilities seemed to influence his entomological activities just as his fascination with *lepidoptera* filtered into his prints, drawings, and paintings.

In 1809, in a letter to his future biographer John Knowles, Fuseli mentioned that he was rearing *Acherontia Atropos* moths in his home. Nicknamed the *Death’s-Head Hawkmoth*, the Atropos has a pattern on the back of its thorax resembling a skull, leading to its later appropriation by John Keats and Bram Stoker (among others) as a symbol of death.

Fuseli's bit of amateur experimentalism may have been inspired, at least in part, by his painting of the *Weird Sisters* from Macbeth, exhibited at the Royal Academy in 1783, in which a massive Atropos flies at the top left of the canvas, its thorax facing the viewer.

Fuseli's The Nightmare by M. H. Kryger

Henry Fuseli, *The Nightmare*, 1781

When first approached, *The Nightmare* confronts the viewer with a dark beauty. Those who are not acquainted with the work are often surprised that it was painted in 1781, a century and a half before the Surrealists began to explore the world of dreams and the unconscious mind. The painting caused an uproar when it was first presented at the Royal Academy in London and almost immediately spread the fame of its maker, Henry Fuseli.

Fuseli, a Swiss painter who spent most of his career in England, was unique among 18th-century artists in that he was known for his scholastic accomplishments as well as his artistic skill. He was part of a circle society of intellectuals, which included botanists and medical physicians to poets, who are said to have influenced his work.

A professor of painting, Fuseli edited Matthew Pilkington's Dictionary of Painters, which became arguably the most widely read reference text of art history in the English-speaking world at the time. Fuseli showed his love of literature through contributing 9 paintings to John Boydell's Shakespeare Gallery and creating his own Milton Gallery with an astounding 40 works.

The Nightmare remains a shocking and strange sight to even today's viewers. The work is actually a culmination of classical motifs.4 Fuseli is known to have said that he was a “classicist in spite of himself.”4 The Nightmare, upon close inspection, reveals many qualities of classical Greek art.4 Nicolas Powell compares the woman in the painting to the *Sleeping Ariadne* statue in the Vatican and the creature crouched on her chest to Hellenistic depictions of hunchbacked beggars. Miles Chappell connects the painting to the Bacchanalian scene carved on a sarcophagus in Naples. In these classical

depictions of Dionysus-worshipping revelry, sleeping women were often featured as objects of sexual desire, as well as evidence of the end of a drunken night of debauchery.

These women were called *maenads* and have a complex and strange history in Greek mythology, entwined with strange sexual, violent, and possibly psychotic behavior. The hallucinations that are often attributed to the *maenads* (literally translated into "mad women") could be related to the strange creatures visiting the woman in the painting.

Fuseli's close relationships and interactions with scientists may have caused him to incorporate medical phenomena into his works. In 1969, Dr. Jerome Schneck compared the painting to sleep paralysis, an experience of anxiety-provoking loss of muscle tone, caused by the REM state in the brain throughout which the individual is conscious enough to register and remember the entire event.

Such events are often associated with frightening hypnagogic hallucinations. These hallucinations sometimes consist of creatures sitting upon the individual's chest, increasing the feeling of suffocation. Although such visions are frightening, they are now understood, diagnosable, and treatable.

The 18th-century definition of nightmare, in fact, included the description of a hallucination of "someone or something sitting on the chest." Sleep paralysis as we know it today was separated from nightmares more than a century later by SW Mitchell, who referred to them as "night palseys."

The dark undertones of mental instability associated with hallucinations, however benign as those associated with sleep paralysis, add to a darker layer of the painting.

Fuseli not only was known as “one of the most well-read painters of all time” but was also infamous for his tempestuous nature and emotional instability. Some have postulated, quite convincingly, that he painted *The Nightmare* as an expression of his torturously unrequited love for Anna Landoldt, niece of his close friend Johann Kaspar Lavater.

A controversial article by Marcia Allentuck argued that the painting depicts the female sexual experience using Freudian ideas of psychoanalysis.9 Although the arch of the woman's back has been associated with a need for movement to be freed from paralysis, it has also been noted as a depiction of a more sensual nature. Although such analysis has been criticized, some elements are not far off and not only because a copy of the painting hung in Sigmund Freud's office.

The creature sitting on her chest, now associated with common hypnogogic hallucinations, stems from myths about incubi and succubae, distinctly sexual creatures, that would, like *satyrs* to *maenads*, sexually violate the paralyzed individual. This motif has been found throughout every cultural region of the world. Peter Tomory suggests that the painting is an expression of Fuseli's sexual fantasies about Anna; indeed, on the back of the canvas is a portrait of her. Udo Kultermann has even suggested that the creature on the chest and appearance of the horse in the corner are evidence of “unconscious bestiality.”

The painting's inky and strange nature has caused this wide array of interpretations in its wake.

Sleep, alongside mythology and renowned literature, was Fuseli's favorite subject. He also depicted *Danaë* and *Perseus* sleeping after being rescued and Lady Macbeth sleep walking through her castle. He spoke of his work in this subject, saying that “one of the most unexplored regions of art are dreams, and what may be called the personification of sentiment.”

Fuseli explored the peaceful nature of sleep, the agitation and pain of sleep disorders, and even the analysis of dreams as a window into the inner self. His visual voyages into the world of the subconscious mind mark him as a pioneer of both art and of the human mind.

Supernatural Seduction by Hannibal de Pencier

Fuseli's assertion that the power of literature inhered in its ability to evoke images was far from disinterested. In 1788, during the same month he wrote about "turning readers into spectators", Fuseli was at work on multiple canvases for Boydell's Shakespeare Gallery, including his picture of Hamlet, Horatio, Marcellus and the Ghost, illustrating Hamlet I.IV, for which he applied and received a fifty guinea advance from Boydell on June 28th. Held back by Horatio, Fuseli's Hamlet leans athletically towards the ghost of his father—who stands tall, armed, illuminated as if by a halo—in whose veritable presence he evidently believes.

The print's dramatic action turns on this pivotal encounter between a dead father and his son, the yearning of the natural, corporeal Prince Hamlet towards the supernatural, elder King Hamlet—a scenario notably evocative of Aeneas meeting the ghost of Anchises. Fuseli would later cast this type of supernatural encounter as the ideal scene through which to engagement an audience.

In his *Fourth Lecture on Painting*, delivered in 1804, Fuseli would write that,

> *It is that magic which places us on the same basis of existence, and amalgamates the mythic or superhuman, and the human parts of the Ilias, of Paradise Lost, and of the Sistine chapel, that enraptures, agitates, and whirls us along as readers or spectators. (IV, 163)*

Ronald Paulson argues of this passage that, “what signifies here is the relationship Fuseli sees between the superhuman and human as the basis for sublimity.”

The passage also, however, signifies Fuseli’s pointed refusal to differentiate the aesthetic experiences produced by literature and painting and his insistence on their analogous power to seduce the beholder: to “enrapture, agitate, and whirl us along.”

Fuseli’s Hamlet is typical of his fixation on the power of supernatural scenes to enrapture readers and spectators and his conception of art itself—both narrative and plastic— as a form of “magic” which may seem to affect our very “basis of existence.” It was, however, a different, more ambitious literary work, through which Fuseli most explicitly conflated aesthetic experience with supernatural deception. Commissioned in 1788 and first exhibited in 1789, *Titania and Bottom* depicts lines 1-39 of Act IV, Scene I of A Midsummer Night’s Dream.

Though compositionally distinct from the sleeping woman motif Fuseli was repeating at this time, the conceptual parallels are remarkable. At this point in the play, at the behest of Oberon, Robin “Puck” Goodfellow has surreptitiously drugged Titania with a “juice” made from a flower on which Cupid’s errant “love shaft” fell. Just as the cupids of Falsa ad Coelum and *Sleeping Woman With Cupid* assault the women with their arrows, Oberon schemes to “streak” the eyelids of his sleeping wife with Cupid’s arrow-infused poison to “make her full of hateful fantasies.”(2.1.630). This induces

her to fall in love with Bottom, whose head has been changed into that of an ass by Puck.

Fuseli depicts Titania doting on Bottom after seducing him with her fairy charms and enlisting her coterie of attendants to cater to his needs. The scene opens with Titania coxing Bottom,

> *"Come, sit thee down upon this flow'ry bed,*
> *while I thy amiable cheeks do coy,*
> *and stick muskroses in thy sleek smooth head,*
> *and kiss thy fair large ears, my gentle joy."(IV.I. 1-4).*

Quoting the pose of Leda in Da Vinci's Leda and the Swan, Fuseli depicts Titania standing over Bottom, who sits as instructed, not on a "flow'ry bed" but on a rocky ground, which merges with the darkness. Ominous figures surround them—most of whom are Fuseli's inventions, not deriving from the text. Vaguely menacing, their presence conveys much of the scene's implicit violence. Most notably, a fashionably dressed young woman towards the right of the composition, whose facial features resemble Titania's, holds a kneeling, shrunken old man on a leash—an amplified mirroring of Titania's power over Bottom.

A moth-headed fairy at the bottom left of the canvas holds a finger to their lips, performing the same function as Harpocrates in Falsa ad Coelum or the "SIGA" column in Sleeping Woman with Cupid. Much like the sleeping woman motif, Titania and Bottom depicts a forcibly imposed erotic fantasy, yet the dynamic of the imposition is multiplied to reflect the mediating step

from Shakespeare to Fuseli to the beholder, or rather: from text, to canvas, to imagination.

The painting's chain of aesthetic transmission is structurally analogous to the play's chain of seductions, with one figure imposing an imagined reality on the next. Oberon, king of the fairies, incites Titania to use her own power to seduce Bottom, just as Shakespeare inspires Fuseli to entrance the viewer: the unwitting, nonmagical terminus of aesthetic transmission.

Chemically induced, Titania whirls her wand above her head, marshaling the figures of her fairy troop to aid in her seduction of Bottom; textually inspired, Fuseli illustrates the play to "whirl us along as readers and spectators."

Contemporary critics did, in fact, put the painting's power over the beholder in such magical terms, such as one critic in the Star who claimed that Fuseli emulated Shakespeare by

> *"rais[ing] in the mind of the spectator sensations which one would have supposed were impossible for anything short of magic to excite."*

Yet, the Fuselian reader/viewer is not formulated as a passive receptacle of aesthetic inputs, like Coleridge's gothic reader whose mind is like a camera obscura receiving the "moving phantasms of one man's [the artist's] delirium."

Fuseli hails an associative viewer whose imagination is enlisted to creative work even as it's subjected to the impositions of the artist. Bottom is seduced,

deceived, subjugated, yet he is also the king of the little knoll on which he's placed, commanding the lesser fairies to obey his whims: "Scratch my head Peaseblossom."(4.1.7). Peaseblossom obliges, shown standing on Bottom's left shoulder.

> *"Monsieur Cobweb, good monsieur, get you*
> *your weapons in your hand and kill me a red-hipped*
> *humble-bee on the top of a thistle, and, good*
> *monsieur, bring me the honey bag"(4.1.10-13).*

Cobweb obliges, shown lunging at the left edge of the canvas with his thistle sword. Mustardseed stands in Bottom's palm, receiving his orders. Titania, the artist, conjures the fairies; Bottom, the beholder, animates them.

Titania and Bottom is one of Fuseli's most explicit formulations of the power dynamic inherent to the conflation of dreaming, seduction, and literary imagination, whereby the reader, or beholder, relating to themselves an internal narrative is both the architect and recipient of their imaginary visions. As John Locke influentially argued in his Essay on Human Understanding, there is a sense in which the subject is always like a person seated within the dark chamber of a camera obscura, just as the mind is a receptacle for information brought before the senses. Yet, the work of Hartley, Warton, Kames, and Alison—all heavily weighted in Fuseli's intellectual milieu—emphasized that the beholder must generate these visons through their own associative trains of thought. There is a collaboration between the artist, who is the prime mover, a conjuror like Fuseli's Titania, and a beholder who must

use their mind as its own supplementary medium (as Fuseli put it in 1788), to supply images in the case of literature, or motion in the case of painting.

Like the images using the dropped book motif, Titania and Bottom is essentially metaliterary and intermedial, formulating the relationship between writer and reader—or artist and beholder—as a meeting between the active creativity of the artist, conflated with sexual potency, and the passivity of the beholder, conflated with sexual vulnerability, or receptivity.

Fuseli once again uses the dream state as an analogy for the beholder's most absorptive state of passivity, in which a receptive mind collaborates with its manipulator: the author as incubus.

The sexual violence of this formulation becomes apparent by comparing Titania and Bottom with its companion piece, Titania's Awakening, a second rendition of the same scene which Boydell likely commissioned (or agreed to buy) only after the overwhelming success of the first canvas. In it, Titania wakes from her dream of bestiality to learn that it was not in fact a dream and that, drugged by Oberon, she was induced (at least by Fuseli's implication) to have sex with ass-headed Bottom. Bottom appears in a state of implicitly post-coitus torpidity, with the ass's head removed.

Fuseli depicts him in a pose quoted from Botticelli's Venus and Mars, with the same euphuistically flaccid wrist as the Roman god of war. A goblin, not unlike that which sits on the sleeping woman in *The Nightmare*, careens above Bottom's head on a flying horse— possibly a figuration of an incubus, an interpretation supported by its similarity with a painting from the same period,

Fuseli's most disturbingly explicit aestheticization of sexual violence, The Incubus Leaving Two Sleeping Women (c. 1793). Such images suggest a more sinister subtext to Fuseli's stated desire to "enrapture" beholders, a word etymologically descended from the Latin *raptus*, variously translated in English as the verb to abduct or rape.

Art, in Fuseli's terms, might be a seduction, but it is bound up in such notions of deception, force, and bodily imposition, that it frequently lapses into a rhetoric of sexual violence.

These elaborately allusive (and largely unheeded) literary games occupied Fuseli during some of his most critically acclaimed years of production, years when the intellectual hubris from which they were born merged with commercial ambition in a fateful miscalculation.

A Short Biography of Henry Fuseli from The Courtauld Gallery

Working at the height of The Enlightenment period, Anglo-Swiss artist Henry Fuseli was a libertine and self-proclaimed genius whose experimental and highly idiosyncratic work helped establish a reputation for controversy.

Born in Zurich, in 1764 he abandoned the Protestant Reformed church in which he was ordained, to pursue a career in London's literary world. His talents as a draughtsman and flair for self-promotion brought him to the attention of Joshua Reynolds who encouraged his artistic ambitions to pursue his training.

In Rome, in the 1770s, Fuseli established himself as the central figure in an international group of artists who shared his desire to rejuvenate modern art by transforming the classical tradition into something more expressive.

Fuseli's vividly stylised paintings depicted fantastic and supernatural themes, drawing on Shakespeare, epic poetry, Gothic horror, folklore, and classical dramas, as well as scenes from his own imagination, often polarising public opinion.

His most famous painting, *The Nightmare* (1782) cemented his fame: in 1799 Fuseli was elected Professor of Painting at The Royal Academy and served for 21 years as Keeper of the RA Schools, working and living at Somerset House in what is now The Courtauld Gallery.

While his public paintings often depicted masculine heroes and grand classical subjects, in private this eminent Royal Academician harboured a preoccupation with the figure of the contemporary woman which he drew obsessively in more than 150 works.

Often representing his wife Sophia Rawlins, who was a model, these drawings depict the finest details of the extravagant coiffures and latest fashions; at times these modern women appear as figures of disturbing power

Fuseli's captivating and complex drawings … provide an insight into late 18th and early 19th century anxieties about gender, identity, and sexuality during a transformative period in European history.

Pictorial: Thomas Eakins –Self Portrait 1

Absurdity

Yes Mistress … by Stephanie Clifford-Smith

‘All right, Martin, you can go upstairs now. Take off your clothes, hang them up neatly, and be waiting for me in the slave position.

“Yes, Mistress.’

With bowed posture Martin walks up the stairs. The penny’s finally dropped that the reason he’s not saying much and avoiding eye contact is because he’s already adopted the subservient role. We give him a minute’s head start then stand up.

Mistress J drops her dress at the bottom of the stairs and begins the almost vertical climb to the bedroom cum ‘dungeon’. I’m a pace or two behind, watching her dimpled bottom move as she ascends. Seeing her stripped to bra, G-string and stockings is when it really dawns on me I’m about to witness something incredibly intimate. I begin to feel apprehensive.

Martin is naked, on all fours, when we enter the small bedroom. ‘Oh good, you're ready, she says, giving his arse a sharp slap. ‘Now get up and stand over here against the wall’

“Yes, Mistress.

I’m glad he doesn’t acknowledge my presence and, forgetting he’s had public sex before, am surprised he shows no sign of embarrassment that I’m there.

Mistress J points to a plastic folding chair in the dim light and I go and sit on it. It's inches from the action.

Normally she'd play her *Music for Dungeons: Bound for Pleasure* CD, but because I'm *here* she decides not to. An electric blow heater has already warmed the room and neutral carpet softens her spike-heeled footsteps. Martin has hung his clothes—neatly, as ordered—on a hat stand and left his white lace G-string on a chest of drawers.

Apart from a few pieces of simple wooden furniture and the utilitarian dungeon equipment the room is pretty bare. A rubber rat the size of a wombat, with red glass eyes, crouches under the bed.

Mistress J attaches leather cuffs to Martin's wrists and ankles, parts his legs, raises his arms and hooks him with double-ended dog clips to a metal grid on the wall.

'I like to start off being gentle with you because it doesn't take very long to increase the pressure …" she says as she begins wrapping leather *thonging* around his penis.

The dialogue between them is playful, and they stay in character the whole time. She includes explanations throughout partly for my benefit and partly for Martin's titillation. 'There's nothing like a leather lace, strategically placed; she says as she pulls firmly on his bald scrotum.

'That's very true, Mistress.'

She grapples with the leather, trying to tie it around his balls, but she can't get any purchase. 'Those testicles of yours are escaping me again. They do this to me all the time. I think I'm going to have to get out my bolt cutters.

'Not again!' he says in mock horror, and they both chuckle.

She gives up and selects two cock rings from a shelf above the bench containing various torture instruments. 'Just simple metal rings, available at your local hardware store, she says, showing them to me before pushing them onto Martin's penis. The first ring, slightly larger than the other, sits at the base, and the smaller one is pushed up against that. I make a mental note to look for the aisle marked *COCK RINGS* next time I'm at the hardware store.

(Later that day I Google cock rings and find they're meant to keep an erection harder for longer. Depending on the material of the ring, they are usually put on a flaccid penis; the blood flows in normally, producing an erection, but is restricted from flowing back out along the external vein. Some cock rings encircle the entire genital package so the scrotum as well as the penis is pulled through the ring. Whichever style is chosen and whatever the material—rubber, leather, metal, silicon—the desired effect is a pleasantly throbbing, long-lasting erection. If the penis turns purple it's time to take the ring off. Martin's soft little penis is a lousy ad for cock rings. Maybe he needs a smaller size.)

Mistress J repeatedly flicks Martin’s dick with a small vinyl whip, which might explain his never-quite-raging erection. It doesn’t look like very thirsty work, but every so often she skols from a big plastic water bottle.

When she’s worried about the circulation in Martin’s arms she unties his hands and gets him to lie on a black iron bench covered with a thin black vinyl sheet. Once he’s horizontal she blindfolds him, ties a rope around the head of his dick, loops the other end into a pulley and cranks it up.

She’s trying to take him to the edge of his pain threshold and he quickly reaches it; Martin screams with the final crank, lifting his hips to create some slack.

‘Oh, stop complaining!’ she snaps, winding the rope back a bit.

Mistress J steadily works her way through her repertoire of torture. She presses a metal-spiked disc into the palm of my hand, telling me it’s an ancient Mayan torture implement, but it’s more like something you'd drop into the bottom of a vase to anchor wayward flower stems. She then presses it into Martin’s nipples, drips black candle wax onto his nipples and scrotum (black wax is the best because it’s easier to see where it’s landing in the dim light of a dungeon), and follows up with the pinch of half a dozen tiny clothes pegs on the same tender spots. It seems to hurt when she squirts alcohol down into his penis with an eye dropper, but within seconds he’s loving the warm sensation it creates. If 1 was listening at the door I'd be convinced by Martin’s ecstatic groans that he was having a fantastic time. Somehow his frequently flaccid penis isn’t sending the same message. He'd said he could stand days

of titillation and loved holding out, so maybe it was all about lasting the distance.

But it's not just torture. There's quite a bit of affection between them and she alternates the painful with the sensual, doing things that even a sexually conservative man would love. At one point she kicks off her shoes, hops up on the opposite end of the bench and massages his balls with her stocking feet. Later she lies on top of him, her knees pinning him at the hips, and nibbles his ear lobes as she runs her feet along his inner thighs. She's an incredible tease, coming so very close to having sex with him but never kissing him, and chastising him when he squeezes a breast or thigh.

After about forty-five minutes Mistress J releases the pegs and Martin screams with pain as the blood rushes back to the surface. She then patiently picks all the wax off his testicles and nipples, and unclips his restraints.

Pseudo-ithyphallic Iconography by Jesse Waugh

At whatever point the representation of male genitalia became taboo artists … apparently continued to need to include the penis in art in clandestine ways - it would seem to me primarily for its symbolism of unconquerable, autonomous male power.

While I was living in Florence, Italy, in 2013, I noticed a pattern of what I termed *pseudo-ithyphallicism* among many of the statues perched throughout the Renaissance city - especially those located in the Piazza della Signoria

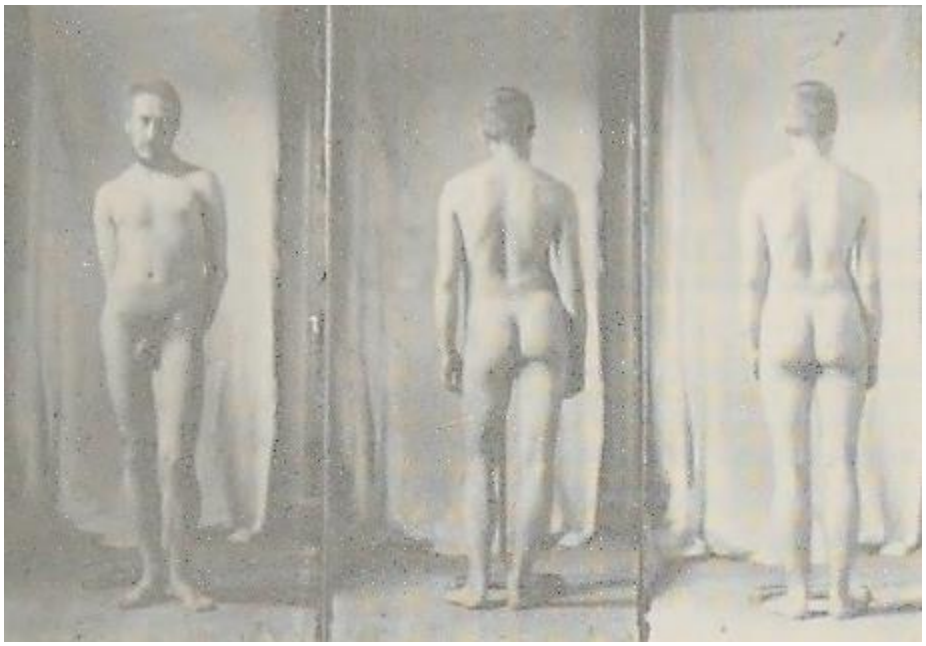
outside the Palazzo Vecchio. The word *ithyphallic* is derived from *ithus* meaning 'straight', and *phallus* meaning 'phallus', or obviously 'penis'. *Ithyphallis* means "having an erect penis", hence my term *pseudo-ithyphallic* denotes "having a false erect penis".

This may seem like a stretch borne of a dirty mind, but before you cast the first stone, observe the following images with an open mind - and you might be surprised:

There is also Perseus holding up the head of Medusa.

There are countless examples of this phenomenon scattered throughout the Western world …

Pictorial: Thomas Eakins – Self-Portrait Part 2



Novella: Three Black Cats by Patrick Bruskiewich

Chapter One

You scratch the surface and New York is a rough and tumble place. It's all about the money. Who has too much … who has too little … and who wants to go from having too little … to having too much. Yes, it's a tough town and you have to know the right people to survive, to make sure the Big Apple didn't chew you up and spit you out as apple sauce. Vincent had not grown up in the New York. He was a country boy from the Colorado who had survived the worst of the war and had grown wise. He was new to the Big Apple and its unusual and understated mannerisms.

The phone rang and rudely woke him up. This early in the morning he had his doubts. In fact every morning he did. The biggest question he asked himself every morning as he woke was why New York, why not Denver. But he had survived the war as a paratrooper with the 82nd and so nothing could really scare him. He had grown to love adrenaline. That, and the fact he packed a S & W in his shoulder holster. He hadn't had to use it yet, but he knew someday soon he would. Imaginably not because he had to, but perhaps because he wanted to.

There is an ethereal thrill having to duck bullets and twice a thrill to shoot back. It had been a couple of years, and he was itching to shoot back.

He answered the phone gruffly. There was a familiar, stern voice at the other end. Her father wanted answers and this is why he contacted him and asked Vincent attend the scene. The Colonel had called him up bright and early that Saturday morning. Vincent had done some detective work for him before,

shadowing his ex-wife when he needed evidence in his divorce case against her. The pictures Vincent had garnered, of his wife in bed with the other man, sealed her guilt and saved the Colonel a bundle of money in Alimony. His ex was a Long Island beauty that had a reputation for being brazen and callous. Yet the Colonel had married her in the spring of 1930, because she was expected and he was the father, or so she claimed … With the pictures Vincent provided him, he set out to publicly humiliate and then divorce her and the other man, her paramour, was deported back to his wife and large family in Salerno.

Miranda, the Colonel's only child, had been caught in the crossfire, and had not taken the matter well. She scorned both him and her mother equally which bore deep into the Colonel's stone heart. Yet he could not abandon the girl even as she pushed him away. She was still too young to go out into the world and make it on her own and the Colonel knew she was eager to go over the wall and give it a try.

In the summer of '47, the Colonel's divorce case made for scandalous headlines in the *New York Herald* as the *Salerno Affair*. In a few months it had earned Vincent a year's salary and made his name as a New York PI. He had been busy ever since, mostly domestic or divorce matters. Hell, it was easy money and there were many clients amongst the rich and influential in New York City. He owed the Colonel …

Vincent rubbed his eyes and then looked at the alarm clock next to his bed. It was just past five in the morning. He had been out on an infidelity case until

well past two the night before, but he pushed past his fatigue and spoke calmly into the telephone. “

“Yes I will look for Miranda, for you.”

The Colonel was worried his daughter had been kidnapped by the Sicilians to get back at him … or something along those lines. He told Vincent about the pier and the pile of clothes and then said she was not one to cause herself harm. As he set down the telephone he stared at his hand. It was shaking ever so slightly. He was damned tired. He had three cases he was already working on. The last thing he needed was another case, and an out of town one at that!

But he felt obliged and besides he knew he would be paid handsomely. The Colonel was one of the wealthiest men in New York City, a lawyer and investment banker. Here in the Big Apple, what he wanted he usually got. He had been his Colonel when Vincent had served as a young Lieutenant in the 82nd. They had been through hell together and Normandy and the Battle of the Bulge. When he was de-mobbed in ’46 the Colonel had helped Vincent set himself up as a Private Eye. It took a few years but Vincent had earned a reputation as a man with a good aim and discretion to boot. Colorado would have to wait.

Well beyond that, you just couldn’t say no to the Colonel, for his connections went all the way up to the Governor of New York and even the White House. The Colonel was the kind of man who, if he wanted to, could make or break lesser men.

Vincent had to drop everything to get on the case. He even skipped his breakfast and started his drive to the Lake, only stopping for toast and coffee at a greasy spoon an hour out of the New York City. He ordered two grilled cheese sandwiches to go and munched on them as he drove the rest of the sixty miles from New York to the remote lakeside pier, arriving there just before lunch.

When he drove up and parked at the local store at the nose of the lake, he took off his belt holster and Smith & Wesson and locked it into the glove compartment. No need for any heat here, he thought. Out of habit he locked his car and placed the keys into his right hand jacket pocket.

The first thing he did was duck into a pay phone, deposit a fist full of nickels and telephoned back to his office. A familiar voice answered "Lang and Co. PI." He didn't waste time with pleasantries. Brusquely Vincent told his secretary he was out of town on a new case and hung up. When he was in such a mood, his secretary knew not to ask him what was up. She knew him well enough to know if there was something he needed to tell her … he would.

When he walked around the right side of the store, he followed the well walked path to the lake. There were a group of *looky loos* gawking at the foot of the pier. There was a deputy holding back the crowd.

Vincent flashed his credentials, muttered 'They were expecting him' and was let through. .

The local Sheriff greeted him indifferently. It was his case and he didn't care for an outsider from the big city pushing him aside. He said as much. Gruffly the Sheriff put his thumbs in his belt and growled. "It looks like a suicide ..."

"Let's not jump to any conclusions shall we Sheriff," Vincent countered

Almost like he did not hear what Vincent said he continued, "I expect to find the kid's body anytime now."

Vincent kneeled down to examine the evidence. "Her name is Miranda." He took out a pencil from his jacket pocket and poked around. "Can you get me three paper bags from the store for me to put the evidence it."

"Who the hell are you to tell me what to do?"

"I have been hired by the girl's father to find her … that's who." The Sheriff left things at that and walked away.

Vincent sighed. He was just too tired to push back. The Sheriff reminded him of a know it all Sergeant that used to give him a bad time, until one Sunday morning in December '44 when a German sniper took him out of his misery at Bastogne.

Vincent studied the evidence. He had seen this before. A pair of shoes and some folded clothes set down at the end of a pier. It usually meant that some depressed person had decided to end their own life by drowning themselves.

But he knew it was important not to jump to conclusions, for it could mean other things as well.

When the sheriff returned with the bags and threw them down onto the pier Vincent had not looked up and mumbled “Don’t worry Sheriff, I will keep you appraised of what I find.”

What made this case special, and perhaps it was the reason he agreed to take it on, is that he knew the missing person … Miranda. He normally did not take on missing person’s cases. They were too tremulous and time intensive. Vincent knew her well enough to discern Miranda was not a depressed type of girl. She had a joie de vivre. At least that was before the court case. Perhaps she had changed since then?

He had first met Miranda when her parents were at each other’s throat in divorce court. Her parents had fought over Miranda’s custody. At the very end of the trial her disposition came up and she told the judge she didn’t want to have to decide who to go with because she was angry at both of them equally. She had told the judge she thought it best to stay in boarding school until she was old enough to look after herself. Her father had set up a trust for her and let her be. Her mother didn’t want her around as she trolled for a new husband. Miranda had to make a life for herself. Miranda struck Vincent as being a sensible type and so he wondered whether her pile of clothes might mean other things.

Vincent noticed the cross Miranda wore around her neck was missing. Vincent knew the cross was a gift from her grandmother. She being a good Catholic girl, Miranda also knew that suicide was a sin.

Fortunately for Vincent, the Sheriff had left things alone. He had been told to take some pictures but not disturb the evidence. Vincent used his handkerchief as he carefully lifted the evidence and put it in the three paper bags. Then he wrote date and the location on the bags and set them under his left arm. He would study the evidence more closely when he was in his office. As he stood up, past the end of the pier the scene before Vincent was of several deputies in row boats with hooks at the end of ropes dragging the bottom of the lake for a corpse.

The way her shoes and clothes had been set down told him something about the Miranda. The shoes were plain white open toed summer sandals. They were nearly brand new. Her pile of clothes had her dainties on top, and a short sleeve white blouse then a plain white skirt. Atop the pile was her watch. There was no wallet, which troubled him. Had someone stumbled upon the evidence and walked off with her wallet? Or had she taken the wallet with her.

"Who found the shoes and clothes?" he yelled back to the Sheriff.

"One of the local kids. He comes down to the pier in the morning to go fishing." The sheriff yelled back.

Vincent turned and walked over to the Sheriff. "Can I talk to the boy?"

The Sheriff pointed to a young boy standing at the end of the pier and ushered him forward with a wag of his finger.

The boy was holding a fishing pole with a hook on a string. He walked along the pier in his bare feet. The young boy reminded Vincent of Tom Sawyer. Tom Sawyer looked dirt poor and honest to a T. There had been no wallet left behind on the pier, and no gold cross on a chain either.

"You look like an early riser," Vincent said to the boy.

He nodded.

"When you walked to the lake did you notice anything out of the usual this morning?"

He nodded again.

"You are not one for words are you?" The boy smiled and waited. The Sheriff got angry at Vincent when he gave the boy an Abraham Lincoln.

Giving him the Lincoln was like turning on a tap full bore on a high pressure water main. Words spouted out of the boy now that the tap was cranked full open. He had heard a motorcycle zip past the store and then stop a few yards to the West along the road.

"Did you see the motorcycle?"

“Yes …”

Vincent took a note pad and pencil out of his jacket pocket. “Can you describe it?”

“Black, a bit beat up. Probably war surplus. Nothing fancy. There were two people on the motorcycle. The driver was the larger of the two. The passenger was smaller.”

“Can you describe either of them? Did you see their faces?”

He shook his head. “No. They both wore black leather. The passenger also wore a white helmet.”

“Did you catch the license number?” Vincent asked hopefully.

“Only the first three letters …H E P.”

“Was it a New York State plate?”

He nodded. “The driver waited next to his motorcycle as the passenger went to use the telephone.”

“Yes …”

“The person talked for perhaps five minutes on the phone then walked down to the lake.”

“Then a few minutes later the passenger was back at the motorcycle, and the two of them started back off and disappeared to the West.”

Vincent pulled out another Lincoln and handed it to the boy. Then he walked back to his car, opened the trunk, set the three paper bags down and lifted a satchel onto his shoulder and started to walk westward along the road.

When he found what he was looking for, he set to work. The thread of the motorcycle as well as footprints were clearly outlined on the loose soil next to the asphalt road surface. There is always forensics to be found if you knew where to look. Vincent started by taking some photographs. Then when the castings were dry he lifted them carefully and wrapped them in newspaper. He walked back to his car and set the three castings and the satchel case carefully into the trunk.

Then Vincent walked down to the pier. There was the Sheriff growling at his deputies in the row boats.

“I am off …” Vincent said.

This was the first and only time Vincent had seen the Sheriff smile all day.

Chapter Two

The previous afternoon Vincent had had a philosophical disagreement with the Sheriff about the disposition of the case and about the evidence. The Sheriff was also not wanting to relinquish Miranda's shoes or clothes. When Vincent said he would need the evidence 'for identification purposes' it was only then he agreed to let him borrow the evidence *for a day or so*. The Sheriff got him to sign a chit and give him his assurance that the materials would be back to him in a few days.

Vincent was back in New York City by five o'clock.

When he had arrived at his office Vincent rang up Miranda's father and gave him a very brief and very preliminary report. They agreed his fee was a Franklin a day, with expenses. One thing that was still left hanging for Vincent is how he knew that Miranda was at the lake the previous Friday evening. When he asked the Colonel about this, there was an awkward pause in their conversation. Then he changed the subject. Vincent know not to ask this a second time. He would have to sort this out himself.

Something else that was odd was Vincent noticed Miranda's clothes were clean and hadn't been worn before they had been folded up and set at the end of the pier. Since Miranda's father was holding back about how he knew she had been at the lake, Vincent decided to keep this fact about her clothes to himself for the time being.

Vincent asked for the particulars about Miranda's boarding school and suggested that he to call the Head Mistress to vouch for him. After getting off the telephone with Miranda's father Vincent waited a half hour before he rang up the Head Mistress of Miranda's boarding school. He told the Head Mistress he would be coming for a visit on Sunday morning around 10, but he did not want to tell her the reason why. All Vincent said to her is that he is a Private investigator and had been called in on a matter that relates to one of her boarders.

Ms. Williamson's School for Girls was on Long Island Sound. It being a Sunday the drive out to the school was an easier one than the trek out to the lake had been. There was not traffic. When he arrived the gates to the School were shut tight and so he had to park his car across the lane from the gate and ring for admittance. The gardener let him in and escorted him to the front entrance, which were locked. The gardener had to knock for their admittance. It was definitely all girls and the draw bridge was up.

A young women, perhaps one of the students, was manning the front desk and walked him over to the Head Mistress' office which was on the main floor at the end of a dark and ominous hallway. The girl knocked on the office door then smiled at him before swinging the door open.

There sat an old hen on her polished oak nest, Vincent smirked back at the girl.

At first the Head Mistress was reluctant to open up about Miranda. As a mother hen she was protective of her little chickadees. But after a few

pleasantries Vincent had her warming up to him. He had decided to wear his pins to the meeting – Airborne Wings and his tiny Purple Heart. She had noticed them.

"What has Miranda done now?" The Head Mistress frowned.

Vincent smiled. Something to go fishing for here. "Oh, does she get misbehave often?"

"Yes, … she's known for some of her theatrics. She is always one to bend the rules or flout convention. Time and time again we had to grab onto her as she trieds to go over the wall."

"Go over the wall?"

"Go into town without permission …. She likes to have fun."

"It must be a bit of a challenge to look after so many young women." Vincent commiserated with a false pretense.

"Over two hundred …" Vincent noticed her shoulders sagged a notch when she said this. "All fierce individualists … but Miranda is in a league of her own."

"In what sense?"

“Her father is very wealthy and influential … and so many people know that. Especially the young men. Miranda is like honey to all the hungry bees.”

“I see … does she go over the wall often?”

“Not as much as she used to. We have reached a sort of understanding.”

Vincent let that statement hang as he produced one of the bags of evidence and asked the Head Mistress whether she might help him confirm whether the items in the bag belonged to Miranda. He started with the shoes. She nodded. Then showed her the skirt and blouse. She nodded again. Vincent decided to not to show her Miranda’s bra and panties. To show her her dainties were more trouble that they were worth.

The Head Mistress asked where he had gotten Miranda’s things. Vincent said he could not say … Reluctantly she let him continue with his investigation.

“Miranda has slowed down the last few months. She has been ill as of late ...”

“Oh … tell me about that.” Vincent took out his notebook and pencil.

“Just the past few weeks … She was ill usually early in the morning or late at night.”

“Ill in what sense.” Vincent asked earnestly.

“Nausea or vomiting. I think it is because of the stress she is under.”

“Stress?”

“The divorce of her parents … surely you know all about that … to help her relax a bit the last few weeks I have cut her a bit of slack”

Vincent smiled. “… a bit of slack?”

“Yes, I have let her go into New York to spend the weekends with her aunt.”

“Oh really” Miranda’s father had not told him about the aunt. “… do you have her contact particulars?”

The Head Mistress open a drawer in her big old oak desk and dragged out a box with little cards. She rummaged through the cards then produced one and set it onto the desk in front of Vincent. He copied out the aunt’s particulars. She hurriedly put the card back into its place and the box of cards back into her desk.

“I need to take a look at Miranda’s room.” Vincent commanded.

The Head Mistress glanced up at the clock. “I am not sure the girls are all out of bed and fully dressed yet. On Sundays we don’t serve breakfast, we serve brunch at noon to let the girls sleep in.

“I only need five minutes to take a quick look around her room.” Vincent handed her one of his cards. “I may need to talk with you again …”

She studied his card and looked up at him. She obviously did not enjoy the prospect of another visit from a pesky outsider. Reluctantly the old hen lifted herself out of her nest and waddled to the door of her office. “Follow me.”

The lobby and stairs up into the school was something right out of *Gone with the Wind*. There was the same young lady that had ushered him to the office sitting behind the solitary desk in the lobby. She sat up straight in her chair as the Head Mistress approached. We stopped at the desk so that the Head Mistress could consult the registry. She pointed to a line in the registry … “here … Miranda signed out Friday at six… she is staying at her aunt’s place.”

Then Vincent and the Head Mistress walked through the empty lobby to the base of the stairs that spiraled up to the second floor. The Head Mistress looked up the long stairs, paused then sighed. Then she turned to the young lady at the desk.

“Mary dear … could you take this gentleman up to Miranda’s room. When he is finished taking a look at her room can you bring him back to me in my office?”

“Yes Mam …” said the young woman. She stood up and led Vincent up the stairs. They walked up the stairs side by side. Even before they had gotten to the top she whispered “what’s up with Miranda?”

“Let’s wait to talk in her room.”

When they got to the top of the stairs there were a series of four doors going in four directions with the names of flowers above them. Mary led him to the Rose door, turned to him and said “wait here a moment … please.” Mary hurried through the door and reappeared thirty second later opening the door and ushering him in “I had to make sure no one was in the hallway.”

Miranda’s room was the second to the right at the far end of the hallway. As they walked down the hall he could see several doors ajar and curious eyes peering out.

Mary knocked on Miranda’s door.

“She’s not here …” Vincent whispered.

“Just checking … somehow Miranda can get into and out of this place undetected.”

When Mary swung open the door, the room mocked her with its emptiness.

“Maybe it is best you remain out in the hall. I will only be a few minutes.” Mary smirked but stayed put in the hallway. Vincent closed the door shut behind him and leaned back against the door surveying the room.

The room was immaculate. The walls were painted beige. The furniture was typical for a boarding school. The furniture was a single bed, a night table

with lamp and alarm clock, a desk and chair, a chest of drawers and a closet. There was nothing that stood out in his measure. He started with the night table. Then the desk. Then the closet. He left the chest of drawers last.

There was nothing out of the ordinary within the drawers, however, when he passed him hand under the bottom drawer he snagged a set of keys, taped to its underside. He took out his handkerchief and used it to grab the keys. He held the keys in his handkerchief as he studied the keys closely. They were on an ornate ring and appeared to be a set of residential keys. He placed the keys in an envelope, sealed it and placed the envelope in his right hand jacket pocket. He would dust them for prints later when he got back to his office.

Then he turned to the bed and lifted the mattress. Vincent came across a schedule for the *New York Central Railway* hid under the mattress. Another clue, but did she leave this on purpose. Vincent starred at the schedule for a moment. Why did Miranda leave this behind? Surely she knew someone would search her room if she went missing? Again he used his handkerchief as he lifted the schedule on its edges and folded it carefully into another envelope. The he carefully set the mattress back down and straightened the blankets.

Had Miranda decided to lay out a trail of bed crumbs? Vincent smiled. Maybe she knew the Colonel would call him in to help find her.

Just as he was about to turn and walk to the door something atop the chest of drawers caught Vincent's eye. There were four small circles set atop the drawer by a thin layer of dust.

He smiled as he walked to the door and swung it open. Mary had been joined by two other girls who had obviously been leaning with their ears pressed to the door. He had caught them dead to rights. "Come in," Vincent ushered the three girls into Miranda's room then closed the door behind him.

"Are you Miranda's friends?" he asked.

With some reluctance they nodded, but remained silent.

"Do any of you have any idea where Miranda might be today?" he queried.

They remained silent … like deer caught in headlights.

Vincent looked into Mary's eyes. "Miranda's father has hired me to look for her. I am a Private Investigator."

"A Private Dick!" the smallest of the three ejaculated with glee.

"Yes. A Private Dick." He lobbied the term back.

The three girls looked at each other for a few seconds before Mary spoke. "You might ask the gardener."

"Why should I ask the gardener?" Vincent was intrigued by her response.

It was one of the other girls who answered his question. "She sometimes grabs a ride back from New York on the back of his bike."

"Bike?" Vincent knew what they intimated but wanted them to open up further.

The third girl spoke up. "Moto … he sometimes gives us a ride about too …" She swept her hand through her hair. This told him something interesting was at play.

"He does … does he? Is that all he does … just take you for a ride?"

The two girls blushed and looked down and to the right. That answered Vincent's curiosity. The gardener must be their inamorato he thought.

He pointed at one of the two girls. "And what kind of motorcycle does he have?"

"Black, sort of run down."

"By chance do any of you know the license number?"

Mary spoke up. "I think it is HEP919."

"You *know* him too do you?" He emphasized the word *know*. She blushed.

There was a pregnant silence. "Look around Miranda's room." Vincent said. "Notice anything missing?"

It was Mary who walked over to the chest of drawers. She passed her hand over the top. "Miranda's piggybank is gone."

Vincent smiled. He had presumed that the four small round marks were in fact the four legs of a piggy bank. "Notice anything else out of the ordinary?"

Again it was Mary who spoke. "Yes … her teddy is gone. She has a teddy bear that she keeps her PJ's in that is usually on her bed. It's gone."

"The Head Mistress tells me that Miranda has been ill." Vincent asked the girls.

Again they looked at each other before nodding. Again it was Mary who spoke up. "She told me she missed her last two periods." Vincent frowned.

"Do you think the Head Mistress knows this?" he asked.

"Hell no …" the third girl said. "Otherwise Miranda would have been shipped home to her parents. That's what they do if a girl gets pregnant …"

"Has this happened before?"

The three girls looked at each other but didn't answer. He looked up at Mary. "Well …"

She nodded. He opened the door to usher the three girls out. Mary was the last to leave. He stopped her with his hand. "Don't tell anyone we have talked will you, least of all the Head Mistress," Vincent said this as he gave Mary his card. "Keep the last thing you just said to me under wraps. If you have anything else you need to tell me ring this number."

Mary unbuttoned the top button of her blouse and tucked the card in her bra. He reached over and buttoned the top of her blouse. "She might notice that." As he did that he could feel her warmth on the back of his hand. She blushed.

When they got to the bottom of the stairs Vincent turned to Mary "Thanks … you've been a big help. Tell the Head Mistress I had to dash …" Mary smiled knowingly.

He let himself out, walked down the winding path to the gate and left the gate ajar as he walked across the lane to his car. He got into his grey Plymouth and closed the door but waited a few seconds before cranking the ignition. It was the gardener who closed the gate.

Vincent had a good look at the boy. Tall, dark and handsome. Yes, he could see how the gardener could be their inamorato.

Vincent's visit to the Ms. Williamson's School for Girls had added to the mystery.

Yes, Vincent was now firm in his realization, this was no suicide. There was indeed much more to Miranda's disappearance … than a mere missing person's case.

Chapter Three

When he got back into his office around six there was a handwritten note left on his desk by his secretary. '*Bill wants you to drop by to play chess this evening*.'

Immediately, Vincent picked up the telephone and dialed a number. A woman's voice answered. "It's Vincent. Bill wants me to stop by for a game of chess." He listened for a few seconds then said, "tell Bill I will be by around 8."

Vincent just had enough time to grab an anchovy and egg salad on Rye and a cup of coffee if he was to make it by 8. He hopped the subway to get there.

There is something about walking into the antiseptic world of a hospital to tell you, you would rather be someplace else. But he owed Bill his life and so if Bill wanted to play a game of chess, Vincent dropped everything and came to play chess. In actual fact they rarely played the game for Bill was a champion at the game, while Vincent was not. It was perhaps because Bill had much more free time on his hands than Vincent did. Usually they just talked over Vincent's cases.

It was in Holland that Vincent had tripped a Bouncing Betty and it was Bill who had shoved him aside just as the landmine went off. The blast severed both of Bill's legs clear off just about the knees. Bill's amputation had been clean and surgical. This is how Bill earned his Congressional Medal of Honor and how Vincent got his Purple Heart. If Bill had not sacrificed himself like

this they would both have ended up dead. They had to dig some of Bill's bone fragments and a fistful of shrapnel out of Vincent. Bill was stateside within days. A few weeks later Vincent was back in the front lines ducking bullets by late February 1945.

When Vincent arrived at the Veteran's Hospital Bill was sitting comfortably in his chair next to his bed reading an old Life Magazine. Bill looked up and smiled at Vincent as he entered his room.

"It looks like they are treating you well." Vincent said cheerfully.

"I feel like hell," was the answer he got back from Bill. "I am bored out of my skull. And the nurses here are worse than a Sergeant Major." He tossed the well worn magazine up onto his bed.

"They just want to keep you healthy and happy." Vincent pushed back.

"They would be happy if I just upped and croaked, here and now," Bill said deftly.

"Nonsense …" Vincent tossed a carton of Lucky Strike cigarettes onto Bill's bed.

"Better hide those or they will confiscate them. Put them in my foot locker under my old kit."

"I can't see how you can smoke so many. " Vincent parried.

“I don’t. I thought you knew. Bartering cigarettes is how we get things done.”

Vincent opened Bill’s foot locker and planted the cigarette carton deep within its contents. “When are you going to get rid of this old stuff?” He let the lid slam shut.

It was Bill who abruptly changed the topic. “The Colonel called me this morning and told me you needed help with your case.”

Vincent turned his back and grimaced. Figure the Colonel to put it this way. Vincent lifted a chair and set it down next to Bill. He fought the urge to ask ‘how you can help’, but he knew Bill would resent that, and so he just smirked.

It was as if Bill read his mind. “Yea I know I am stuck in my bed … or this chair … in this dreaded hospital, but my brain still works even if my legs no longer do.”

Ouch, Vincent thought. This was Bill reminding him how he got here. Vincent could feel the blood drain from his face.

Bill saw his face go white and drew back. “You seem to forget that I am a trained intelligence officer … The Colonel knows I can take disparate facts and piece them together in a logical fashion and see things that others may not see. Besides you should remember that I was a NYPD detective before the war. I know a thing or two.”

Vincent smiled and said “let me tell you what I have so far.” The Colonel had been too proud to tell Bill the case related to his daughter Miranda. Or perhaps he just wanted things to be left hanging until Vincent showed us, so that Bill would not spend the day over thinking the case. It took Vincent the better part of twenty minutes to carefully set out the facts as he saw them. Bill sat quietly with his eyes closed listening attentively. You might wonder if he was asleep but every so often his eyes would open and he would make a face then close his eyes.

At the end of the brief Bill opened his eyes. “You have the motorcycle license number do you?” Bill asked. Vincent took out his notebook then wrote the license number out on a piece of paper. Bill reached over and rang the bedside summons. A few seconds later a nurse appeared. “I need a telephone,” Bill said to her. She returned in a few minutes with a telephone on an extension line.

After the nurse cleared the room he said, “I wish they would just leave it here.”

Bill toggled the cradle a few times until he got the hospital operator. “This is Bill … I need to make a call to Detective Paul McCutchan at the sixth precinct in New York.” He set the cradle down and in perhaps thirty five seconds the telephone rang.

“Paul … its Bill … fine, thanks for asking. I need you to look up a motorcycle license for me … missing person’s inquiry … who … can’t say, but it’s important … here it is New York license … HEP919 … I will wait on the line …

Bill smiled at Vincent then placed his hand over the mouthpiece. "This shouldn't take too long. You know there is a reason why the Colonel wants me to help … "

Vincent wanted to play the game so he asked.

Bill responded, "I know people and I know things."

"Yes Paul … wait one."

Bill motioned to Vincent for some paper and a pencil. Vincent scrambled to provide it. When Bill had what he needed he spoke into the mouthpiece "Go on …" Bill wrote down the particulars and handed the paper to Vincent. "So Paul when are you dropping by to say hello? Soon … Don't forget the Jack Daniels. What? It's Vincent on the Case. Yes I will keep you posted. Thanks Paul. "

Bill set the receiver onto the cradle. "Thanks." Vincent held up the piece of paper.

"It sounds like Miranda just wants to disappear," Bill said, "and for obvious reasons." Bill made a mound on his belly with his hands. "Something … is in her oven …"

"Should we tell the Colonel?" Vincent asked his friend.

Bill shook his head. “Hell No … let’s find the girl first. We wouldn’t want to needlessly add to the Colonel’s worries would we?” Bill chortled. Despite all that he has been through Bill has not lost his sense of humor, dry as it might be.

Vincent smiled as he stood. They shook hands.

“What say you call me each night around 8 and we can knock our heads together and solve this case.” Bill said.

“Sure … “Good idea.”

“Can I give you some parting advice?” Bill’s voice was stern which meant he was serious.

“Don’t play the heavy with the motorcyclist. Let him have his fun. He is obviously a Casanova, but he is not the cause of Miranda’s predicament. He can help you find her.”

“How do you know that?” Vincent asked.

“It’s quite obvious isn’t it?” Bill waved him on out the door. “Off you go.” He reached over to the summons. "It is time for my massage.”

in the hallway Vincent passed the nurse replying to Bill’s summons. She was quite a dish. Given how well he was being looked after, Vincent could not really feel sorry for Bill.

When he stepped from the hospital back into the fresh night air Vincent smiled. With Bill's help Vincent knew where to go next with his search.

Chapter Four

He took Bill's advice and tried not to 'do a heavy' on the motorcyclist. Instead he spent the morning tailing the boy. In the afternoon he followed up with the train schedule he had found under her mattress. To help him out, Vincent called Bill to ask he had put in a call to the dispatcher at the *New York Central Railway*.

Bill had a few connections with the *New York Central Railway* and so they didn't mind tracking helping Vincent track down the conductor on the train that passed the next stop past the lake that Saturday morning.

Yes he remembered a young woman get on the train, all dressed in black. Leather in fact. She had barely made the stop and had to run down the platform and hop aboard just in front of the conductor. She carried nothing more than a knapsack. He had had to grab her hand and hoist her aboard. This made it hard for him not to notice her. He said the whole snatch and grab was something you expected to see in the movies. The scarf covering her hair fluttered away and was left behind on the platform.

Did the conductor remember where she was off to? That required a bit more convincing. It took out an Andrew Jackson.

The conductor accepted the banknote, before responding. "Kalamazoo … She was off to Kalamazoo."

“How do you know this?” Vincent asked. There was a pause and out came another Andrew Jackson.

The conductor took the second banknote and continued. “She asked about the connection to Kalamazoo. It’s not on the direct New York to Chicago line. She got off at the right station for the Kalamazoo branch line. I can only assume the obvious.”

Later that afternoon Vincent snagged the gardener outside a fast food joint. He paused beside the motorcycle to check out its tread. It was definitely the same tread in the casting he had taken. He knew exactly what to say to the motorcyclist as he sat down on the stool next to him at the Ma & Pop he stopped for dinner at.

“Tell me about Kalamazoo …” were the words he used to open the conversation.

The young man nearly chocked on his burger. There was the sound of a flick as a switchblade was opened and poked at Vincent’s ribs. Vincent responded by opening the lapel of his coat just enough so that the boy could see he was wearing a shoulder holster with his Smith and Wesson.

“Best you put it away son. I don’t want to hurt you.”

Vincent looked down as the boy slowly closed the switchblade with his left hand. Then the boy took a swig of his coffee and grimaced as he asked “What about Kalamazoo?”

“I know you are Miranda’s friend.” Vincent whispered.

He got no answer.

Vincent looked down at the boy’s boots. “You wear a size eleven boot, just like the boot casting I made out near the lake. Your motorcycle tread matches a casting I took out there as well. I have caught you dead to rights.”

The boy slowly turned to face Vincent then spoke up, “… I am a good friend in fact, so there is no use asking, ‘cause I ain’t telling.”

“I know Miranda likes grabbing a ride on the back of your bike. I understand you are very popular with several other girls at the Ms. Williamson’s School for Girls on Long Island Sound.”

He gave Vincent a glare with his eyes. “What of it …” Then he turned back to his burger. He took a big bite out of the burger and began to chew like a fat cow.

“Listen if I were young and fancy free like you I would be enjoying life to its fullest just like you. Don’t worry your secret is safe with me … Casanova.” Vincent said.

The boy eased off a bit. “Any chance you can just disappear and leave me in peace?” He went back to enjoying his burger.

“I am a Private Detective hired by Miranda’s father … he wants me to find what up with his daughter.”

“You’re not a cop then?” the boy said.

Vincent shook his head. “I can see you helping girls like Miranda out when they want to go over the wall.”

The boy smirked proudly.

“I know about the pile of her clothes at the pier at the lake…Last Saturday morning I know you drove Miranda to the lake and then to the railway station just past the lake. She barely got onto the train as it left the station. ”

The boy turned his head to look at Vincent. “How do you know that?”

“I spoke with the conductor. He tells me he had to grab onto her and lift her on the train as the train left the junction. She was dressed in leather just like you are.”

“So that’s how you know about Kalamazoo …”

“Yes … what of it?” Vincent asked.

“Can’t help you there.”

Vincent placed a Franklin on the counter next to the boy.

The motorcyclist stared at it. “What’s that for?”

Vincent placed a second Franklin onto the first on the counter next to the boy.

“My friendships are not for sale,” the boy said proudly.

“I am not asking you to betray any secrets … I am just asking you to help your friend Miranda. I know Miranda. I am worried about her. I know she is in a predicament.””

His eyes shot wide open. He slowly collected up the two Franklins and pawed them into the pocket of his black leather jacket.

He opened up just a little. “Listen, all I know is that she needed to see someone. Someone very important in her life. I think he is some artist.”

“An artist … can you tell anything about him?”

“I think he has a studio in the village. I would sometime pick her up there on a Sunday afternoon then drive her back to school.”

“Do you have an address for the studio?” Vincent offered him a serviette and a pencil. He wrote the address down and flicked the serviette back at Vincent.

“Once when I picked Miranda up at her aunt’s place I think I saw the artist scurrying down the street. Best you go ask Miranda’s aunt who he is.”

“You know about the aunt do you?”

He nodded. “want her address?”

“I all ready got it, but thanks for offering.”

The gardener took a few seconds to think things over before he spoke again. “Listen, I like Miranda and I know she likes me.”

“I don’t doubt that. You are obviously a friend to her.”

“It’s not what you think. She’s not like the other girls to me. She is really special.”

“In what ways?” Vincent asked him.

“Well first of all she spotted me for the motorcycle.”

“I see … and?”

“Sometimes Miranda took the Long Island Choo choo into town and sometimes she would ask me to drive her there. On Sunday afternoons she sometimes took the train back or got me to drive her back. “

“Did she pay you for driving her about?”

He shook his head. “Even if she offered, I wouldn’t let her.”

“Did the other girls pay you?” Vincent asked, even though he already knew the answer.

“What do you think?” he scowled back.

“Maybe not in green backs …”

The boy chortled and grimaced as he looked at Vincent.

Vincent leaned over and whispered into his ear. “You get any of those girls pregnant and the Head Mistress will go after you with the hedge pruners.”

“In my measure of things Miranda is a good egg. I want you to know this.” Vincent got up and just before he turned to leave he gave the boy his card and said, “if you hear anything give me a call. I have a friend in the war surplus business who can get you a better motorcycle … for dirt cheap. ”

“If you find her don’t tell her we talked ok? She won’t trust me ever again. I enjoy going over the wall with Miranda … and the other girls as well.”

Vincent smiled to himself as he exited the Ma & Pop. Time to swing by the aunt’s place.

Chapter Five

It was well after dinner that he pulled up to the Brownstone. There weren't any lights on in the building which caused him to frown. He pulled the ornate ring of keys out of his pocket. These were the keys that Miranda had secreted away under the bottom drawer of her chest of drawers. He was playing a hunch.

Vincent opened the glove compartment, extracted a flashlight and put it into the left pocket of his jacket, closed the glove compartment, then stepped out of his car. He kept the door unlocked in case he had to make a quick getaway.

Vincent looked up and down the street. He could have walked directly across the street up the stairs and to the door of the brownstone. He had established a habit to approach the unknown in a roundabout fashion.

Vincent walked to the end of the block, crossed the street and began to proceed up the opposite side tossing the keys up and down in his hand as he walked. Anyone watching would put two plus two together so that when he bounded up the stairs and opened the door to the brownstone, they would know that he had keys to the place.

That's exactly what he did. Once he unlocked the door and stepped into the Brownstone, Vincent knew he had violated several statutes of the State of New York and was perpetrating a break and entry. But if the police attended they would not shoot him, for he wasn't a crasher and a judge might rap his knuckles but not send him to the pokey up the river for he was doing his job.

Everyone knew there was a gray area in the law set aside for Private Dicks and their antics.

The air in the Brownstone was stale and the mountain of mail behind the door told him the aunt was away on some trip and Miranda hadn't been here for quite awhile. Vincent wanted to be in and out as quickly as he could so he made a b-line to the kitchen because he knew that was always the place you could collect good evidence.

Sure enough there were two empty bottles of wine in the trash bin. He lifted them carefully out of the trash bin with a pencil then coaxed them into a paper evidence bag. There were some unwashed dishes in the sink, along with two wine glasses. He lifted the wine glasses and wrapped them with a clean towel he snagged off the front of the oven and put the glasses into a separate bag. He would dust the bottles and glasses when he got back to his office.

Honestly, Vincent did not want to check the bed rooms. But he did go upstairs and checked, and well the beds were all as they should be. He wasn't on a divorce case and well, if the Colonel asked … he could say he hadn't and leave things at that.

In all of five minutes, Vincent was in his car and on his way. He had seen all he needed to see at Miranda's aunt's place, and no one was the wiser.

Chapter Six

When he got back to his office his secretary had left his messages on his desk.

Call Bill.

Call the Colonel.

Call the Sheriff. He crumpled this message and threw it in the waste bin.

Vincent dusted everything at once and got two clear sets of prints. On the train schedule he had a single set of prints which he assumed were Miranda's. He took a photograph of this set of prints then set to work on the wine bottle and glasses.

On one of the wine glasses he found Miranda's prints. On the other wine glass he found a second set of prints that matched all the prints lifted off the wine bottles. On the wine bottle he also got a clear palm print as well. He took a photograph of the second set of prints. He also lifted some of the prints using graphite pencil shavings and clear cellulous tape. He transferred them onto a small card, wrote a short note and put it in his pocket to give to bill later.

Vincent then lifted some prints on the pencil he had given the motorcyclist to write down the address of the artist's studio. His prints were different than the second set of prints taken off the wine bottles.

Vincent smiled. He was telling the truth after all. When it came to Miranda her motorcyclist wasn't that much of a Casanova after all. They were just friends.

Vincent called Bill first, briefed him on the latest of the case and then asked him about what to do with the second set of prints. He suggested Vincent swing by and speak with his friend at the Sixth precinct. Bill seemed to be able to read leaves. He assumed that the second set of prints were the artists, and Vincent had already told him that the artist's studio the motorcyclist mentioned was in Greenwich Village. The Village was in the purview of the Sixth Precinct. Bill gave Vincent the direct number to his friend at the Sixth Precinct, but suggested he call him first and then call Vincent back.

Vincent said to Bill he would call the Colonel and talk with him for perhaps fifteen minutes. Could Bill call him back in a half-hour?

Bill hummed and hawed. Vincent was annoyed. "Let me guess … your massage?"

"Nope … Bill chuckled …"my sponge bath."

"Just stand by. It will only take a few minutes."

Sure enough eight minutes later his phone rang and Bill was back with the news his detective friend could help Vincent "… in an unofficial capacity."

What does that mean … in an unofficial capacity?"

“You know Murphy’s diner?”

“Yup …”

“When you need to talk with him, give him a call and he’ll arrange a time to swing by Murphy’s diner and you can buy him an apple pie a la mode and a coffee.”

“Wilco …” Vincent responded.

“Oh … when you are at Murphy’s … ask Mabel, the tall red head, when she’ll be stopping by to bring me some freshly baked apple pie.”

“How many tarts do you need?” Vincent spouted before catching himself.

There was a chortled at the other end of the line. “The more the merrier … you should know that by now. Sitting around all day I have all this pent up energy. Gotta go … can’t keep them waiting for my sponge bath.”

The telephone line went dead. What a lucky bastard, Vincent thought.

He toggle the cradle a few times until a tone appeared then he dialed the Colonel. The first thing he asked the Colonel was about Miranda’s aunt in New York City.

“Miranda doesn’t have an aunt.”

"On 49th?"

"The bitch … that's her mother's old place. But she's on the Riviera dredging up a new husband. How did you find out Miranda was going there."

Vincent decided not to mention the keys but to mention the boy and his motorcycle. He made it sound like he got the address from the motorcyclist and not from the Head Mistress. To make it sound like he was making progress Vincent mentioned Miranda's missing piggy bank and the teddy bear with her pajamas. But he made no mention of the train schedule and the talk he had had with the train conductor.

"Sounds like you are making progress. So Miranda is still somewhere here in new York City?"

Vincent couldn't bring himself to tell a lie so he sort of stretched the facts a bit. "Tomorrow I am checking out a lead in Greenwich Village."

"I've told her over and over again to stay away from the Village. They're nothing but trouble down in the village."

"Can I ask you something …"

"Yes Vincent, what is it?"

"How old is your daughter?"

“She’s about to turn seventeen.”

“Does she go over the wall often?”

“She tries but …”

“But what?”

“I think this is the first time she has made it all the way over.”

“I see. So you know about her past escapades?”

“Yes, pretty much.”

“You know about the motorcyclist then …”

“Yup …”

“Was he the one who telephoned you about Miranda going up to the lake?”

“Yes … he mentioned he had drove her there then left. He says she is trying to get away from someone, but he says he doesn’t know who that is.”

Now it made sense why the boy was reluctant to take money from Vincent. He was already in someone else’s employ. Suddenly Vincent angered. “Can I ask you something else?”

“Shoot …”

“It’s the Sicilian your ex is seeing in the Riviera isn’t it?”

Suddenly the phone went dead. Almost immediately Vincent wondered if perhaps he had gone too far … in asking what to him is an obvious question.

He tried to phone the Colonel back to apologize but no one picked the phone.

Chapter Seven

There is no use getting up bright and early and making your way down island to the Village. Most people don't get out of bed there until noon and then play until the wee hours of the morning.

If you arrived in the Village in the early part of a morning it was like a plague had wipe out all but the street cats, and the mice and rats they danced after. Occasionally you might also stumble across an intoxicated reveler or a street drunk sleeping it off. The Village cats, mice and rats know to leave them alone. Usually they are curled up in their own vomit.

To be fair there are a few places in the Village that stay open twenty-four-seven to cater to the all night crowd, or to sober the intoxicated reveler up well enough to send them back up island to their job, their lives or their families. These are a no questions asked kind of places.

As far as their world is concerned, you are either a Villager or you weren't. If you are, then you are welcomed, but if you aren't … like Vincent … they see you coming and wonder what brings you here. The wine, the women, the drugs or … the art.

They weren't much surprised when he started asking about Edward the artist. The first question that came back at him was "are you someone's older brother ,.. or you a cop?" It seems Edward loved figurative art and had a huge libido. This meant he had a reputation, and a slew of illegitimate children to boot. He also had a rap sheet for making counterfeit art. He was good at making

reproductions of the French Impressionists … as well as the French Modernists.

The figurative art angle would be fine and tolerable if he were a good and successful artist, but from what Vincent could make out he was both a poor artist and a poor bum as well.

Edward could barely make script here in the Village. He was the poorest of the poor in the Village. Now that's rather hard to do.

When Vincent finally found himself at the door of Edward's studio he knocked firmly out of frustration. He had to knock twice before the door opened a crack. The women who answered the door had clearly been on a bender the night before. He had definitely just woke her. Two black cats rushed past him into the hallway.

If took Vincent a bit of finesse to convince the woman he meant her no harm. She opened the door and stepped aside. Vincent stepped into the studio.

After he had closed the door he continued. "I am Miranda's older brother Vincent, and I am looking for her. "

"Who is Miranda?" the woman asked as she rubbed sleep out of her eyes.

He described Miranda to the woman. "I heard she was hanging out with Edward …" Vincent continued.

“She sounds like the girl who called herself Mary that I met here at a party last week.”

“That’s my sis’ middle name. She sometimes doesn’t use her first name with strangers.” Vincent was making things up on the fly to keep the conversation moving.

“Well, if she was hanging out … she was hanging out … *n’est ce pas*?” the woman waved her hands across her torso as she said this.

“*Oui … sans aucun doubt* …” Vincent tried his French on her.

She giggled, paused a second to ‘cess him up to see if she wanted him to stay a bit longer, then asked him “Coffee?”

“Sure … just black.”

“Like your humor, no doubt.” She smiled as she stepped into the small kitchen.

“You have me pegged.” He retorted.

She looked out from the kitchen and grinned. “Don’t I wish!”

Oops he thought. Didn’t see that coming. Vincent let her sauciness pass. He pulled a chair back from a rickety old table and sat down. The woman set a

cracked coffee cup and saucer in front of him them poured some coffee out of a dented aluminum coffee percolator.

She went back into the kitchen for a second then returned carrying her coffee. It was black too. “No cream or sugar around here,” she said.

“Just you …” Vincent grinned.

She took a sip before asking. “You’re an old soldier aren’t you?”

“82nd Airborne … “

She turned and looked him in the eye. “I lost my younger brother in the war. He died at Eindhoven.”

“Bloody hell! Far worse than I ever saw while fighting in Europe. Brave man your brother.”

She stood up and came and sat on his lap. She wrapped her arms around his neck. “You from around here?”

“Around here?” He was caught surprised.

“The Village …”

“Up island …” He sipped at the coffee. It was a much better than he thought it would be.

“That’s not that far from the Village is it?”

Vincent shook his head. “What brings you to New York?”

“I am here for the summer subletting this studio, taking sculpting classes at NYU.”

“First time here in New York?”

She nodded.

“Where are you from?”

“Denver.”

Vincent’s face lit up. “Me too.”

She let her robe open enough for Vincent to spy her legs.

“Are you always so forward with men?”

“Nah not really … only with cowboys from Colorado.”

“Here too you have me pegged.” They both giggled. She started to play with the top button on his shirt.

As they talked Vincent let her unbutton his shirt and run her hand down his torso.

“You should sit for me sometime. You would make a marvelous sculpture.”

“Give me a reason to come back.”

She leaned forward wanting to kiss him. He put a finger on her mouth and smiled. “Remember I am looking for my little sister.”

She ‘fested up that Edward has gone to Oxbow for the summer, near Kalamazoo.

“What’s Oxbow?” he asked.

It’s an artist retreat. Each summer artists gather at Oxbow. It is one of the few places where figurative art is encouraged. Places like NYU and even the Village aren’t so bold.”

He looked at his watch, then lifted her off his lap and stood. “I gotta go.”

“But the day is so young,” she complained.

“I promise you I will come back and you can … sculpt me.” He smiled for he knew what she really meant. He gave her his card.

“Private Dick … ehhh.” He didn’t know why but he felt his face go flush.

She tussled her hair, a signal she understood. "Is there a message for Edward?"

"Tell him that I want my little sister to call me. You can give him my number."

"And what about us?" she said as they walked to the door.

"What's say we meet up at the Met this Friday at five and you can walk me through the Greek and Roman exhibits." Vincent thought, what the hell, why not. He hadn't been out on a date for ages. He opened the door and stepped out in the hallway, then turned and just stood there.

She wrapped her arms around his neck, nodded, and closed her eyes. Vincent smiled and planted a soft kiss on both cheeks "*comme les Francais*" he said as he unbraided her arms from around his neck. Vincent knew it was the gentlemanly thing to do. She was lonely and all by herself in the Big Apple. He walked down the hallway without looking back. He was half way down the stairs before he stopped and turned. There she was at the top of the stairs watching him walk away.

"Friday at five … at the Met …."

Through all this little drama Vincent kept his cool even though he knew he had struck pay gold!

As he walked down the rickety stairs, Vincent pondered the $ 64,000 question … should he, or should he not tell the Colonel he was next off to Kalamazoo?

Chapter Eight

Bill was happy to see him and another carton of *Lucky Strikes*.

Vincent had gotten his secretary to deliver an envelope with the second set of prints to Detective Paul McCutchan at the Sixth precinct. It hadn't taken the Detective McCutchan that long to get back to Bill with the rap sheet. In fact he decided to deliver a Photostat of the rap sheet himself, along with a long awaited bottle of Jack Daniels.

Vincent feigned ignorance as Bill handed him the Photostat and gave him a verbal low down on what more Detective McCutchan had told him about Edward Morely. "Forgeries mostly, of paintings, sketches and a few pastels. But no convictions."

"Why no convictions?" Vincent asked noting McCutchan was the disposing detective.

"The District Attorney decided to keep the case open but not bring it to court."

"That's interesting …" Vincent retorted. "Isn't he a bit of a bull dog?"

"Perhaps someone got to him, or perhaps there is another angle to this case we don't know about." Bill voiced the obvious.

"Did you ask him about his off the record view on this case?" It was Vincen't turn to ask the obvious.

“Yes I did. After all his hard work, Paul believes it was because the gallery owners who bought the stuff wanted to keep the whole matter under wraps to protect their reputations.” Bill smirked as he said. “Success in the art world is really about reputation isn’t it?”

“Success for the artists … or for the gallery owners?” Vincent queried.

“Both I guess … it’s a sort of chicken and the egg quandary isn’t it? Bill responded.

“I guess you could put it that way. That’s not how I would put it.” Vincent smirked.

“Then there is the question of black market art. A lot of the art that was looted by the Nazis is still unaccounted for.” Bill said sternly.

“No doubt … I guess this makes it doubly easier for characters like Mr. Morley here.” He rapped the rap sheet with his knuckles.

Bill nodded. They battered on about the nuances of the forgery case against Morley until they had assessed the matter from three directions. Vincent then told Bill about stopping by Edward’s.

Bill was quick on the draw. “Dumb … dumb … dumb!”

Vincent was surprised about his harsh response.

“You’ve tipped Edward you are on to him.”

“Are you sure?” Vincent decided to tell Bill about the young woman who was renting out the studio for the summer while she took art classes at NYU. He paused a few seconds before he mentioned his promise for a date with her Friday night and the Greek and Roman exhibit at the Metropolitan Museum.

“Clever boy … she won’t want to let that slip by will she! So what next?”

I have to go back to my office and call the Colonel. “Stand down.” Bill motioned to the telephone next to his bed. “They have let me keep it here while the case progresses. They know it’s a missing person, and the missing person is a young woman. The hens flock together on things like this.”

“It’s best we rooster watch out.” Vincent retorted. Bill chortled.

Bill reached over from his chair and picked up the receiver, toggled the cradle a few times and got through to the hospital switchboard. “Doris, its Bill … fine and you? Ok maybe two packs. Come up at the end of your shift.” Bill covered the receiver with his hand and whispered “thank god you brought me another carton of Lucky Strikes… Doris smokes like a steam locomotive.” He uncovered his hand from the receiver and said “Who this time? The Colonel … you keeping notes? Good girl!”

He set down the telephone and in a few seconds it rang. Bill motioned for Vincent to pick it up. Indeed it was the Colonel.

Bill listened as Vincent briefed the Colonel on his latest discoveries. He didn't mention going to Edward's studio or meeting the woman there, only that Edward was an artist and a person of interest in the case. He mentioned that Edward was away at Kalamazoo. Vincent held the receiver so that Bill could hear what the Colonel said next. "Damn Miranda I told her not to hang out with her artist friends." There was a pause then a question. "What next?" Bill heard Vincent say. Bill gave Vincent a thumbs up.

Vincent said "I am off to Kalamazoo."

Chapter Nine

Her name was Cheryl and indeed she was all legs. She met up with Vincent at five sharp at the bottom of the steps at the Metropolitan Museum. It was Friday evening. She insisted they go Dutch, but he insisted they did not. Vincent won out in the end.

Now that she had make up on and a nice bright orange dress with all the trimmings she was a different woman than the tired woman who had poured him a cup of coffee in Edward's studio earlier in the week. She also wore a bright orange scarf around her long brunette hair. Cheryl turned heads as they walked up the stairs.

Vincent had a hard time keeping up with her. She took the stairs three at a time as if it was the natural thing for her to do. This was the habit of a girl with such long legs. Vincent was always one step behind her up the stairs. In fact as they ventured through the Met this would remain his cadence. She led and he followed her around but Vincent didn't really mind that.

Cheryl was a woman who knew he own mind. As they stood in front of one of the Greek sculptures she had a little fun with Vincent. "Look how broad and commanding the warrior is, and then look at his little thingy." She turned to him, waggled the little finger on her right hand and giggled as she said this. He enjoyed the fact Cheryl was flirting with him. Vincent hadn't been out on a date for months but instead had had his nose close to the grind stone. Sure it related to a case he was on but he tried to forget that, at least for the time being.

Vincent was trying to remember how to flirt. He hadn't been on a real date since before they shipped it off to England and war in the spring of 1944. Such there were the women outside the gates of Camp Claiborne, in Louisiana, and a bit later at Fort Bragg, North Carolina. But hanging out with them didn't really count as dates, more like distractions. There were also the English girls, lonely for their husbands in the Med, and happy to have the 'blessings of the yanks,' to bring them canned ham and the like. This outing with Cheryl was different. She was enticing him on and he was trying the best he could to flirt back. But hey, flirting was like learning how to ride a bicycle. Once the training wheels were off, they were off.

Vincent stood next to her in front of a Roman sculpture. "Can I ask you something?"

She turned to him and smiled. "Sure"

"You mentioned that my sis was at a party recently. Tell me about the party …"

She turned to him and looked him up and down. "My girlfriend, your sis Mary and I were the only gals in the place. Eddie's party was really for the *Rumpsters*."

"*Rumpsters*?" Vincent hadn't hear the term before.

“You know … three dollar bills … all of Eddie’s friends are Rumpsters. I thought you knew that.” She was about to ask him something but Vincent stopped her in her tracks.

“No I am not … why were you at the party then?” Vincent pressed on.

“You sure ask a lot of questions. Can I ask what you do?”

“You can …ask … but I won’t answer.”

Cheryl eyed Vincent suspiciously. “You a cop?”

He shook his head.

“FBI then?”

He shook his head a second time.

“You’re not going to tell me are you?”

He shook his head a third time.

“Then I will have to guess …”she turned back to study the Roman sculpture for a half minute. She turned to face Vincent and asked, “is Mary really your little sister?”

Vincent nodded. “Yes. She has fallen off the map and I am wanting to find her. I am worried about her.”

There was an awkward silence then Vincent continued. “Can I ask you how it is you are leasing his studio for the summer?”

“I needed a studio for the summer. My girlfriend heard Eddie needed a live in to look after his place while he was away at Oxbow. You know, to water his plants and feed his cats.” She turned to him and smiled then said, “only a gay man keep cats …”

“Really …”

“Do you like cats?” Cheryl asked him.

“Hell no …” Vincent said scornfully.

 “Eddie has three black cats. Lucky for me he took the wild one, the boy cat, with him to Oxbox. The other two are mollies … and are constantly fighting with each other.”

“Lucky you!” Vincent commiserated.

“Eddie telephoned me yesterday morning to ask how things were going. I heard a woman’s voice in the background. It sort of sounded like Mary’s.”

“Did you tell him I was looking for my ‘sis?” Vincent asked her.

“No … I thought you might want to surprise her. She has nothing to worry about with Edward does she?”

She suddenly made her move and put her hand into Vincent’s and gave it a squeeze.

“If you’re going to Kalamazoo can I come too? I have always wanted to go do art at Oxbow.”

Chapter Ten

Since he was leaving the confines of New York State Vincent figured it best to leave his S & W behind. He had a permit to carry in New York but not in Michigan.

Around six that morning he called Bill and asked him if he knew anyone in Kalamazoo. Bill said there would be someone waiting for him at the station when he arrived. He mentioned he was leaving his 'kinsman behind. "I hear you …" Bill responded. "I will make sure a cousin is waiting there for you. Good luck."

The morning following their Met meet up Vincent arranged to meet up with Cheryl at 8 at Grand Central Station. It being a Saturday the place was packed beyond words. But Cheryl was easy to spot. He had been waiting perhaps ten minutes before an eddy of admirers flowed around perhaps the prettiness woman in the place as she made her over to where he was standing.

"Mr. Smith I presume." She was bang on time and confirmed the reason why Vincent let her tag along. He gave her a quick peck on both cheeks like the French do when greeting an old friend. Given the way she was turned out Cheryl could easily be mistaken for Marlene Dietrich. On this train trip Vincent will be all but invisible traveling with Cheryl.

Bill had pre-ordered a sleeping birth for one. The ticket attendant smiled as he changed the pre-order to a roomette for two. He turned to Cheryl. "You older than twenty miss?" He had a Texan drawl.

She nodded. “You know I gotta ask this too,” the ticket attendant uttered. “You married or kin?”

Cheryl wrapped her arm around Vincent’s left arm and said “this is my husband … Mr. Smith.”

The ticket attendant lowered his head and stapled the roomette ticket together and handed it to Vincent. “Well Mister Smith … have a nice trip,” he muttered.

Cheryl took this as the spur to give Vincent a soft kiss on his cheek. “We both will.”

Then she winked at the ticket attendant leaving him flush and bothered, as they both turned and made their way to Gate 12. “I’ll take the top bunk” she whispered.

Vincent knew the next day and a bit board the NYCR train will allow him to polish his flirting and get him ready for the trials and tribulation that awaited him at Oxbow.

Chapter Eleven

What was waiting for the two of them was unexpected but welcomed. It was an old Ford truck with Michigan plates. The rusted and run down truck looked like it had barely survived the bombardment on the beaches at Normandy. The young woman who shook his hand smiled at Vincent. "Bill said there would be only you. Who's the Ostrich?"

Cheryl leaned over, gave Vincent a peck on the cheek and introduced herself as his wife.

The young woman was unconvinced. "Got to try harder … got to try harder."

The girl got behind the wheel of the truck and motioned to the truck bed, "you gotta chuck your stuff back there. There's no room up front for both you and your stuff."

Vincent asked Cheryl, "any breakables in your luggage?"

"Just my perfume bottles," she answered.

"Better take them out then." Vincent said.

It took Cheryl and minute or so to extricate the two small bottles and she held them in her hands as she clambered into the truck. Cheryl would have to sit in the middle between the driver and Vincent, with the stick shift between her knees.

Cheryl got in, rolled up her dress well past the ties to her garter belts and then dropped the bottles of perfume on her lap. The girl behind the wheel glanced at the bottles, and her garter belts and smiled. "You're definitely a city girl." Cheryl quickly secreted the bottles into her purse and threw her purse up atop the dash.

The driver started the old monster and it roared into life. Vincent was surprised by its raw power. The driver leaned forward, looked past Cheryl at Vincent and smiled. "It don't look like much on the outside but you can run bootleg with his ol' truck and they'd never catch up with you."

"Bill said you needed something. Look in the glove compartment." Vincent opened the glove compartment and saw something wrapped in oil cloth. He picked it up but didn't need to unwrap it. He knew what it was by its weight. It was a Colt '45 – a man stopper. He put it back into the glove compartment, closed it and smiled back. "Thanks. It's exactly what I need." Bill had also found Vincent the perfect partner to help out here in Kalamazoo.

Cheryl didn't ask Vincent what it was. Instead she leaned forward and turned on the radio. It took four or five seconds before it came to life. The country and western music that was on the air was to Cheryl's liking. She turned down the volume to match the drone of the truck's motor and the sounds of the road surface rushing past.It was a good 250 miles from Kalamazoo City to Oxbow. The last thing Cheryl wanted was to be caught into the middle of the banter between Vincent and the driver.

Cheryl reached over with her right hand and took Vincent's left one. Vincent seemed to understand what was on Cheryl's mind. He lifted her hand and plunked it in his lap with his hand on top. She started to tickle and tease him.

The woman behind the wheel began to sing quietly to the music. Cheryl closed her eyes and leaned her head over onto Vincent's shoulder and fell asleep.

Six hours later they were rolling up under the sign over the gate to Oxbow. How she did it amazed both the driver and Vincent. Cheryl had slept the whole six hours.

They took their luggage out from the truck bed and set it on the ground. "I phoned ahead to say you'd be visiting a few days and needed a bed … I guess you need two now … The office is over there."

She pointed to a small building then hopped back behind the wheel of the truck. She glanced back out the window and said. "I will swing by tomorrow afternoon to see what's up." Then she was off, leaving behind a roar and a cloud of dust in her wake.

Chapter Twelve

Bill got up early to make the call. When he got through the familiar voice on the other end of the line sounded both concerned and cautious. She was the twin sister of one of his 82nd Airborne buddies that got it during their jump over Normandy. His Dakota took a direct flak hit from a German 88 and burst into flames. No one got out. The plane turned back and plunged into the English Channel. Bill had jumped from the next plane in the line and got a front row seat to the flaming tragedy. There for the grace of God go I is what Bill thought as he swung under the canopy of his parachute watching the Dakota fall out of the sky as flaming paratroopers bailed. Not a single one of those chutes opened.

He would be the one to write Brenda the letter that told her how her twin brother died over Normandy. He was one of the unlucky bastards to jump that day.

Like her brother Brenda did not pull her punches. Bill was surprised to hear that Vincent had brought a woman with him on his adventure. Brenda was upset because he wanted Vincent all to herself. She wanted to kick back, drink beer and talk about her brother. Bill promised her that after the case was over she could come visit him and he would tell her how brave and honorable her brother was.

That bought her patience and tolerance. "For God sakes Brenda … give Vincent a break. There must be a good reason he invited her along!" Bill was miffed with Vincent but not to the point of admitting it to Brenda.

“Did you introduce him to his cousin?” Bill asked. They were talking on an insecure line and he figured, with the FBI crawling all over New York the way Hoover wanted them to, it was best to talk in riddles. Hoover had started out here and had never strayed too far from his beginnings when it came to his misdeeds and misdemeanors.

“Sure … I did what you asked. He didn’t take it with him. Instead he left her behind.”

“Leave his cousin be. He will ask for her when he needs her.” Clever boy, he thought. If someone searched his things today they would not find the Colt. When their call was at an end, he gently set the receiver down on its cradle. Bill had promised himself he would not get angry at Vincent. If he did, Vincent might clam up and he might miss something important for want of a fact or two from Vincent.

Bill put his hands behind his head, leaned back in his chair, and closed his eyes. His call with the Colonel last night had given him a grand idea. Bill and Vincent should go into business together as PIs. Bill would be the brains and Vincent would be the brawn. Any day now they would fit him with his artificial legs and then let him loose from the hospital. Bill knew he needed something exciting to keep his busy.

Bill smirked. Apart from combat, what could be more exciting than fighting crime?

Chapter Thirteen

They were treated like unwanted guests. Had they wanted to sleep alone it would have been easy. Cheryl would have a bunk in the women's quarters and Vincent would have one in the men's, but Cheryl insisted they were a couple.

The woman got them to sign the registry. "Either of you models?" She eyed Cheryl as she asked them. She had fun and motioned at Vincent with the thumb of her right hand. The woman behind the counter looked Vincent up and down than said "models get a discount." He decided to have fun with Cheryl and pointed at her with the thumb of his left hand. The woman behind the counter rolled her eyes.

They only accommodation they had available for the two of them was the breezy loft of an old barn and two old hammock obviously crafted some summers back for just one season. They had arrived just around dinner time and for a stately sum of five dollars their overnight stay and meals were paid for. As they followed the women over to the Gambrel barn Cheryl whispered to Vincent "I am a pretty cheap date,"

He whispered back, "I wouldn't call you that … by far …"

The loft was full of old hay and stagnant air. He opened the hayloft door and the cool evening breeze quickly pushed the stale air away.

As the woman made her way back down the stairs she looked back and spoke over her shoulder. "You might just catch dinner if you dash. Oh … and don't leave your stuff on the ground. The mice will get into it."

They hung their luggage on the hay hook and tossed the two hammocks on top then followed the woman down the rickety stairs. When they stepped back out of the barn she pointed to the food house.

They really didn't need her help to find the food house. All they had to do was follow their noses or just listen to the dull banter that carried across the courtyard.

"Cheryl, do me a favor …" Vincent was most adamant. "If you see Mary in there don't wave. Don't even acknowledge you know her. Let her sort out whether she wants to talk with us."

Cheryl stopped and turned to him. "Why?" she asked.

"She might be in some trouble …" Vincent responded.

"You mean she's pregnant?" Cheryl uttered.

Vincent was taken aback. "How in God's name do you know?"

Cheryl ran her hand through her hair. "We girls have a sixth sense about things like that." She nodded. "Sure … we'll play things as they come."

The moment Vincent and Cheryl entered the food house all conversation halted for a few seconds. Then a familiar face caught Vincent's eye. She looked up at him then went back to her meal. She did not look up at them again for several minutes.

The dinner was a pretty reasonable Hungarian Goulash. The chef was obviously Hungarian. The red wine served with the Goulash was not Hungarian, but it was close enough. It was probably Greek, for it was a Retsina of some sort heavy on the pine resin.

After they had collected their meals, and some freshly baked bread and freshly churned butter, Cheryl and Vincent both turned back to face the room. There were perhaps fifty or sixty people, dressed as paupers might, enjoying the Goulash.

Vincent watched as Miranda leaned over to the two people next to her and said something. The two diners, a man and a woman, got up, gathered their empty dishes and then vacated their places. Clever girl, Vincent thought. Those vacated seats were now the only two places, side by side, in the whole room. Cheryl pointed to the vacancy and then led Vincent over to the bench next to Miranda. As she walked through the room several of the male artists eyed her hungrily. One even stopped her and asked "you a model?"Cheryl flirted with him "what do you think … deary?"

When they arrived at the vacant places, Cheryl sat down next to Miranda and leaned over to give her a kiss. Her message was clear, Cheryl was a good

friend. Cheryl then turned and pointed at Vincent. Vincent shook Miranda's hand. From afar it looked like a first time introduction.

Anyone watching this would think Cheryl was introducing Vincent to Miranda. Indeed, across the room there was someone watching the whole charade. He was snagged, hook line and sinker. It was Edward Morley.

Damned he thought. It was bad enough that Mary was here. Now Cheryl is here too. Eddie watched them closely, but in a way that it appeared he was not watching them closely.

Miranda whispered past Cheryl. "Vincent, what are you doing here?"

"Dad wants you to come home …" Vincent deliberately left out the word *your* … to keep Cheryl in the dark as to who he really was."

"Does he know I am here at Oxbow?" Miranda whispered to Vincent.

"I haven't told him. All he knows is that you are somewhere near Kalamazoo. But I bet he suspects." Vincent told her a white lie. Miranda sensed this and frowned.

Cheryl saw her angst and quickly changed the subject. "How are things at Oxbow?"

Miranda turned to Cheryl and decided to ignore Vincent for the time being. "A lot of fun actually."

“Are you drawing or being drawn?” Cheryl asked.

Miranda smiled. “A bit of both, actually.”

Cheryl turned to Vincent and put her hand on his arm. “He’s come here because he agreed to sit for me.” Vincent gave her a frown.

Miranda pushed back. “Vincent could have done that for you back in New York.”

“I guess he could have … but where’s the fun in that. Just him and me in a little studio. Here we can dress him up as Poseidon and everyone can enjoy drawing him.” Cheryl had a big smile as he said this.

From across the room Eddie took this as the queue they would be sitting and chatting for some time.

Miranda pointed at their goulash. “Best you jump in before it gets cold.” They obliged. She poured them both some Retsina. Miranda nibbled on some bread while they bantered.

Since Vincent did not know what Eddie looked like he would not have noticed him get up and leave. But Cheryl knew him. She saw him leave and then return all in the space of ten minutes. That was just enough time to rifle through their luggage and then return.

Miranda joined Cheryl and Vincent as they left the food house. It was Cheryl who stopped beside Edward Morley to say hello to him. She did not bother to introduce him to Vincent. Miranda had ushered him past Eddie and through the door.

“Who’s the lug head with Mary?” Eddie asked.

“Oh, that’s just her older brother,” she said convincingly then carried on.

Chapter Fourteen

Miranda had walked up to the loft with Vincent. It was good he had left the Colt in the glove compartment of the Ford. Their stuff had been rifled, but by someone who knew how to do this while leaving the minimum fuss. They had a few minutes alone before Cheryl joined them. Miranda had a few minutes to grill Vincent and Vincent was totally honest with her. "I haven't told your father about your predicament."

When Cheryl clambered up the rickety stairs to join them. Miranda and Vincent stood at opposite sides of the loft, obviously at odds with each other. Vincent did not tell Cheryl he suspected their stuff had been searched. Cheryl turned to Miranda. "How are you feeling?" Cheryl asked.

"Hell …" Miranda threw her arms up in frustration. "Does everyone know?"

"Don't get angry at your brother … I figured this out all for myself." Cheryl said.

"It is so obvious?" Miranda looked down at herself.

"Sort of …" Cheryl responded. "It's not your belly but your boobs that are giving it away."

"Huh …" Miranda sighed in frustration.

“You don’t remember but a few weeks before we met at Eddie’s party we happen upon each other at Grand Central Park.” Cheryl continued.

“You have a good memory …” Miranda said. “And an eye for detail.” She plumped up her breasts with her hands.

As the two women bantered Vincent was studying Cheryl’s body language closely. Instead of turning her body fully towards Miranda, Cheryl was turned so that she could study both of them at the same time, as if she was assessing the moment carefully. He suddenly realized Cheryl really wasn’t who she claimed to be. Vincent frowned when he realized he should have asked Bill to check her out.

Cheryl noticed Vincent was frowning and asked him. “What’s up Hercules?”

Well two could play that game. “You know I don’t think I want to model after all.”

Cheryl pushed back “Ahh … but you promised.” Miranda looked at him and smiled.

Chapter Fifteen

After their little tete a tete in the hay loft. Miranda had taken Cheryl and Vincent under her wing and gave them a tour of the Oxbow artist community. She seemed to walk easily around the place until they approached the small building that Eddie called his 'studio.' Unlike the other places that had opened doors and welcoming artists. Eddie's studio was different. The door was locked and the windows covered over on the inside with packing paper.

When Miranda knocked there was a delay of perhaps twenty second before Eddie asked who was there. "It's me Mary …"

"Anyone else with you?" Eddie asked from within.

"Yes, Cheryl and …"there was a slight pause as Miranda looked up at him before she said "Vincent … my older brother." She said this convincingly.

In a dozen seconds the door swiftly opened and Eddie stepped outside and quickly closed the door behind himself.

"Cheryl, what are you doing here? You should be looking after my cats."

"Don't worry Eddie … your cats are being well looked after." Cheryl pushed back.

Eddie bore into Vincent with his piercing black eyes. “Cheryl tells me you are Mary’s brother. Mary didn’t tell me she had a brother. I don’t know who to trust.”

Vincent turned to Cheryl and smirked. Vincent offered Eddie his hand and they shook. He did not press too tightly and neither did Eddie. Eddie’s hand felt cold. This sent a chill down Vincent’s spine. Vincent sensed the menace of the man.

It was Cheryl who asked “can we come in and see what you are working on?”

Eddie put his arm across the doorway, frowned and shook his head.

“Must be something scandalous,” Cheryl said. He gave her an icy glance.

It was Miranda who broke the ice. “Eddie never shows anyone his art until he is finished a piece and puts it in a showing.” She smiled meekly. Miranda took Cheryl and Vincent’s arms and led them away. Eddie watched them as they walked off.

“That man scares me,” said Miranda. “Best the two of you stay away from him.”

The three of them spent a pleasant evening walking from one studio to another as the artists did their work until at sun down a bonfire was lite and everyone drifted to join the festivities except Eddie.

It was around ten that the old Ford truck rolled in and the driver came and sat down next to Vincent. "Bill says hello. He is pissed that you brought your girlfriend along."

"You mean my wife?" Vincent said loud enough for Cheryl to hear.

The driver poked him in the ribs. "Ouch that hurt." She was about to do it a second time when he grabbed her elbow and stopped her. "What's your name?"

"Brenda," She answered back

Vincent whispered into her ear. "Well … Brenda … she's my wife in name only." He stood up and arched his back. "I need to stretch my legs a bit."

"You want me to come?" asked Cheryl. Vincent shook his head. I'll be right back.

Brenda walked with Brenda back to the truck. When they were alone she gave him a quick briefing of what she and Bill had talked about. "Tell Bill I vouch for Cheryl. She isn't who she claims to be … but she is not bad either."

"What is that mean?" Brenda asked.

Vincent handed her a small object wrapped in his handkerchief. "See if someone can lift prints off of this." Brenda unwrapped the object and saw it was a perfume bottle. She nodded.

Vincent retrieved the Colt from the glove compartment, counted the number of rounds in the magazine, replaced the magazine, placed a round in the chamber then set it to safe. He then tucked the automatic into his jacket pocket. “I hope I don’t need this.”

“I hope so too.”

“Be back here at noon tomorrow.” Vincent asked.

She nodded. “Good luck.” Brenda started the truck then roared off.

When he got back to the bonfire Miranda and Cheryl were sitting there talking like old friends. They both waved Vincent back but he waved no and pointed to the barn.

A few minutes later when the two women arrived Vincent had hung the hammocks.

“I will be right back,” Miranda said and then left Cheryl and Vincent alone. It was an awkward silence because neither of them knew were to begin.

Vincent broke the silence. “I told Brenda to come pick us up tomorrow at lunch.”

“Who is Brenda?” Cheryl asked.

“She’s the woman who drove us here in the old Ford …” Vincent answered.

“Oh … and how do you know her?” Cheryl inquired.

“She’s a friend of a friend …” He responded. That was good enough for Cheryl.

They both turned as they heard someone trudging up the stairs. It was Vincent who walked over to the top of the stairs and looked down. Cheryl watched as he quickly disappeared down the stairs. In a few seconds Miranda appeared at the top of the stairs carrying a hammock over her shoulder and then Vincent, carrying her luggage.

“Can I sling out with you here tonight? I would feel a lot safer.” Cheryl nodded.

Chapter Sixteen

Vincent waited until the full moon had dropped far below the horizon and he knew everyone would be asleep. They had hung the third hammock for Miranda on the other side of the hay loft and then found an old bed sheet to string across the loft dividing the loft by genders. The two women gabbed well into the night.

After they finally fell asleep Vincent could hear mice scurry hither and thither across the lost.

He did not bother to get dressed, but gathered up his clothes, his shoes and the Colt and then tiptoed over to the loft lift. He had insisted they hang a rope there as a second route of escape in case there was a fire and they might get trapped in the loft.

When he was sitting on the platform he carefully slipped into his clothes and put on his shoes leaving the shoe laces untied. Then he checked the Colt was safed, and tucked it into the back of his belt. One of the 82nd lost a leg when they shoved a Colt into his belt and the gun went off. He was lucky it was only a leg he lost.

Vincent spit into his hands, rubbed them together and then slowly and carefully shinnied down the rope. He had to climb down slowly because the tackle squeaked ever so slightly as he climbed down hand over hand over hand. When he got to the ground he moved the Colt to the front of his

trousers, again checking the safety was on. He bent down and tied his shoe laces tight.

He had good night vision, something that had saved his life several times when he was slinking around the European countryside. Vincent made his way ever so slowly and carefully to Edward's studio. When he got there he just sat and listened to see if there was any sounds coming from within. After a few minutes he walked to the door and pressed his ear to it. He could not hear any snoring, but he knew that was not a certainty that there was no one within, because only half of all sleepers snored.

He knew not to try the door for it would surely be locked tight. He walked around the building and noticed it had two windows. Both windows were too small for anyone to gain entrance. He didn't really need to go inside, he just wanted to take a peak in. Both windows were draw ups and both windows had latches on the inside. He felt the ledge with his fingers and noticed the windows had not been painted shut. He drew his finer along the ledge and realized the windows had been opened recently. There was some sticky oil on the ledge. When he brought his fingers up to his nose he recognized the smell to be sardine oil. Eddie had been feeding some cats.

He rubbed the oil onto his jacket then continued on. Vincent produced a thin metal ruler from inside his jacket and worked it between the windows up to the latch. Here was something he learned as little kid on the West side of Denver. One … two … three … adroit pushes and the latch gave. He smiled to himself as he drew the window up. It moved the window a few inches and it stuck. He struggled with it.

Vincent was so fixated on the task at hand he did not hear the person creep up behind him. He unexpectedly felt the muzzle of a pistol pushed to the base of his skull.

"You so much as twitch and I will blow your brains sky high." He recognized the voice. "Who are you trying to kid! You aren't Mary's brother." It was Eddie.

"I didn't hear you coming …" Vincent answered back in a loud voice.

Eddie wacked him on the back of his head, then pointed the pistol back at the base of his skull. "None of that now …"

"None of what?" Vincent growled back. The pistol felt like a Luger.

"Making any noise. I am going to search you. You try to stop me … I pull the trigger." Eddie started to pat him down. He found the Colt and extracted it from his belt. Vincent could hear the Colt's safety being drawn open.

Eddie stepped back from Vincent. "Turn around," Eddie barked. Vincent turned slowly and could see Eddie had both pistols pointed squarely at him. No time to be a cowboy, Vincent thought.

Then out of the window sprung a cat bounding from within the studio. For a split second Eddie looked down at the cat. It stopped at his feet then bounded away. But it was not long enough for Vincent to try a grab at Eddie's gun.

“Damn ...” Vincent thought to himself.

“We’re going inside.” He motioned towards the front of the little building with the Luger. They walked around to the front door. Vincent stopped at the threshold. If they stayed outside Vincent knew he had a fighting chance. Eddie pushed him across the threshold with his foot. Well, Vincent thought, at least he would get a look inside to see what he was up to. The question was, was Eddie going to pump him full of lead?

When they got inside Eddie drew the door shut with the back of his foot. The door did not make a sound. Vincent had noticed this that fact that afternoon but hadn’t thought anything of it. Here was a lesson to be learned the hard way. Note to self … Vincent needs to be more observant and more tactical. Eddie must have oiled the hinges.

Eddie flicked on the overhead electric light. It shone brightly. For a split second they were both blinded. Again Vincent hesitated. He knew Eddie was on a hair trigger and didn’t want to risk it. Not yet at least … until he knew what this was all about.

Eddie pulled up a chair and motioned for Vincent to sit on it. Then in a split second Eddie leaned Vincent and the chair back against the wall. There was no way for Vincent to move about without setting the chair out of balance and tumbling to the floor.

Eddie backed away from him with the Luger pointed squarely at Vincent's torso. The man knew what he was doing. Vincent surveyed the studio. There was an old easel and a table stacked high with squeezed tubes of oil paints. There was a half-finished forgery on the easel, and the original leaning up on a table nearby. It looked like a Picasso. Eddie noticed he was taking the surroundings in.

"So what's your game here? You a cop?" Eddie said setting Vincent's Colt down on the table. He was right, it was a Luger that Eddie packed about.

Vincent moved his hand.

Eddie lifted the Luger to arm's length and aimed. "Careful now, no sudden moves."

"I am just reaching for my wallet." Eddie swung the Luger back and forth as if he wanted him to continue. When he did this Vincent noticed the safety had been sprung on the Luger.

Vincent presented the palms of his hands and then slowly lifted his wallet out of his pocket and tossed it onto the table. Without taking his eyes off Vincent, Eddie lifted the wallet off the table and opened it. He quickly glanced at the PI license.

"So you are a private dick ..." Eddie relaxed a bit. "Who are you working for?" Eddie asked as he groped his pockets for a package of cigarettes.

“Mary’s father. He hired me to find her and encourage her to return home.” Vincent answered.

“Encourage …” He lifted a cigarette with his lips out of the package then started to search for a match.

“Entice … then.” Vincent watched Eddie search in vain for a match. “She can be really stubborn at times.” Eddie snickered.

“Why the Colt and why your interest in my doings?” Eddie continued to search for a match. He shuffled over to the table next to the easel.

“Her father thought she might have been kidnapped or worse. He gave me the gun and ordered me to take it with me. I am usually unarmed.” Vincent was making the story up as he spoke. But Vincent knew he didn’t sound all that convincing.

Still no match. Vincent could tell Eddie was coming a little unhinged.

Vincent wondered if he should chance it.

“You smoke?” Eddie growled at Vincent. Vincent nodded.

“Got a match then?” Eddie asked him.

He shook his head. “A lighter … much better … until they break down.”

Vincent carefully reached into his jacket pocket and drew out his lighter. It was a Zippo made only for members of the 82nd. He reflected the light off the shining surface of the lighter trying to blind Eddie with it. Then he launched the Zippo off the top of the table with such English that it skipped off the table top and distracted Eddie for a split second.

Vincent lunged off the chair. Eddie stepped aside and Vincent missed, tumbling to the ground. He grabbed for Eddie's legs and tried to tackle him but Eddie struck him on the back of his skull with the full force of the butt of his Luger. In a split second Vincent had drifted off into unconsciousness.

Eddie untangled himself and stood up. He picked the Zippo lighter off the floor, noticed the 82nd Airborne markings and frowned. He used it to light his cigarette and took a long draw. Then he sat down on a chair. He took another long draw from the fag. He kicked Vincent's knee but Vincent did not stir. Eddie tossed the Zippo up and down in his hand. This gave him determination.

Eddie stood up, took up the Colt from the table top and wrapped a piece of cloth around the nuzzle hoping it would deaden any gunshot. He aimed it at the back of Vincent's head. He pulled the trigger, but nothing happened. When he set the Colt down on the table he had unconsciously safed it. He cursed in German then unsafed the Colt and pointed it again at Vincent's head.

Just as he was about to pull the trigger a second time there was a scratching at the base of the door. He hesitated for a second … smiled, set the Colt back down on the table, then turned and walked over to the door. When he opened

the door he half expected to see his cat standing there waiting to be let in. Instead the door was empty.

Eddie took one step out of the studio. He did not have good night vision and so he did not see the person hiding in the darkness next to the door.

Eddie did feel the kick to his solar plexus. When he bent over in pain, the last thing he felt was the well placed Rabbit Punch that took him down and severed his spine.

After that he felt nothing.

Chapter Seventeen

Vincent had a terrible nightmare. He dreamed he was a goner and wondered if he would ever regain consciousness. When he did regain consciousness it was to the sound of the old Ford barreling down a country road and the jostling about by the potholes of the back road. Vincent woke up wrapped up in an old woolen blanket. His head was in Cheryl's soft lap. He groaned as he tried to lift his right hand to the back of his head. His head throbbed. Cheryl told him to keep still. "What happened?" Vincent groaned.

"You tried to take the monster on by yourself." Cheryl answered.

"The monster?" Vincent retorted.

"Cornelius Schwinger …" Cheryl said

"Who the hell is that?" Vincent immediately regretted he had yelled.

"Cornelius Schwinger … a.k.a. Edward Morley … He was actually a Nazis on the wanted list."

"*Was* … is he dead?" Vincent knew the answer before he asked.

"Yup, I had to. He was about to blow your brains out with your Colt." Cheryl was without remorse.

"Who the hell are you? FBI?" Vincent queried.

No … SIS …"

"SIS?"

"British Intelligence. We at MI6 have been on his trail for the past two years."

"So you are a spy!" Vincent said admirably.

"Not really. I am an operative." Cheryl corrected him.

"An operative … what the hell is that?" Vincent asked.

"Sort of what you are … a PI is to the police is what an Operative is to MI6." Cheryl stroked his forehead. "I bet you have a whopping head ache.

He smiled. "You don't sound British." Vincent said.

"I am Canadian …" she answered softly, "… from Montreal."

"What did you want Eddie … Cornelius … for?"

"He was forging artwork the Nazis had looted during the Holocaust. He was part of an organized crime network raising money for thugs who have gone to ground after the war. At the moment your Government is fixated with Communism and wanting to give a pass to Nazis like Schwinger."

“Where’s Miranda?” He tried to turn his head but his head felt like lead.

“Stay still. Things are fine with her.” Cheryl pointed at the cab of the truck with her thumb.

“Does she know?” Vincent asked her.

“Hell no … and we’ll keep it that way. She thinks you went for an early morning walk, stumbled over a tree stump and fell and struck your head.”

“Won’t someone suspect foul play?” he asked with some skepticism.

“No, not really. Everyone knew Eddie to be a bit sketchy. I left behind a silver Italian lira in his mouth … sort of a *Cosa Nostra* calling card. I snagged the original paintings and we are taking them back with us. It won’t take the Oxbow crowd long to sort out Eddie was a forger. I think they will all give a sigh of relief when they find he has moved on …”

“I guess that is one way of putting it.” He sighed. “So where are we off to?”

“Back to New York. We should just make the 5pm train.”

“You’re pretty thorough …” Vincent said.

“Thanks but I need to tell you my boss will be very angry with me.” Cheryl said.

“Why’s that?” Vincent wondered.

“I was tasked to track back through the art forgery network starting with Cornelius … You sort of fouled things up.” Cheryl caressed his forehead.

“I am so sorry …” Vincent lamented euphemistically. “Thanks for saving my life.”

“I saw you get up and sneak out so I decided to follow you. Until then I wondered if you were part of their network. None of us at MI6 really knew who you were. It all made sense when I listened in to you and the Monster talk. I was outside the window. When he got ready to shoot you I had a choice, either shoot him or draw him out and do the silent kill … his black cat Felix gave me an idea. I scratched at the base of the door. He opened it and well …. he was dead by the time he hit the ground. ”

“You killed him with your bare hands!” Vincent was impressed.

Cheryl smiled. “I have just one question. Know anyone who might want three black cats?”

Chapter Eighteen

"You knew, didn't you?" Vincent questioned Bill.

"Not to begin with, believe me. When I made inquiries about your tomato Cheryl, the Colonel showed up with some pretty interesting characters in tow. They did the twenty question thing with me … but wouldn't reciprocate. They wouldn't answer any of my questions. Pretty hush hush!"

"I really stepped into it, didn't I?" Vincent admitted.

"We did …" Bill replied. He opened the top drawer of the white painted steel cabinet next to his bed, pulled out a leather card holder and tossed it into Vincent's lap. Vincent lifted and opened the card holder. There inside was a brand new Private Investigator's license for the State of New York dated two week prior.

"What the hell … You didn't tell me." Vincent was angry at Bill.

"Hold your horses stud …I didn't know and hadn't even asked for it. The Colonel arranged this for me. He thinks you and I can make a good team."

"Let me guess, me the brawn and you the …" Vincent did not have the chance to finish the sentence.

"Front man … the man tucked behind the desk …" Bill tried to humor him.

“The brains …” Vincent conceded.

“Well if you put it that way.” Bill smirked.

“What about Miranda?” Vincent asked.

“What about her?” Bill replied

“Isn’t she in a predicament?” Vincent asked.

“No … it was all stress. She is a very high strung person. She just needed to unwind a bit. Things are back to normal with her and she tucked back in at Ms. Williamson’s School for Girls. The Colonel says thanks by the way.”

Bill extracted an envelope out of the top drawer and tossed it into Vincent’s lap. He looked inside the envelope. Inside were twenty crisp, freshly minted Ben Franklins and a letter. As he read the letter Vincent smiled. Both Bill and he were on retainers tasked with looking after Miranda the next time she goes over the wall.

Miranda was to contact Vincent to pick her up, take her to town as her ‘older brother’ and see Miranda back to Ms. Williamson’s School for Girls Sunday evenings.

“And what about Cheryl?” Vincent asked.

“I doubt you will ever see her again. You know the way these spies are.”

“Operatives …” Vincent stated.

“What?” Bill shot back.

“Cheryl is an Operative, not a spy.” Vincent corrected him.

“Operative … spy …” Bill chortled. “It’s all a bit too spooky for me!

“How is it the two cases overlapped, ours and hers?” Vincent asked.

“It was not a mere coincidence. I think the Colonel had something to do with that. ” Bill speculated.

“How?” Vincent was perplexed.

“Beats me … The Colonel did have a foot in both worlds. Oh by the way, your tomato wanted me to give you this.” Bill said as an afterthought.

Bill extracted a large manila docket out of the top drawer and tossed it to Vincent. It was a file envelope with one of those string ties he remembered from government documents. He opened it slowly and pulled out its content. Vincent smiled. He had half expected the *Officials Secret Act* or something along that line. Instead, there was a picture of a Cheryl smiling and holding up …

Three Black Cats.

Pictorial: Shucking an Oyster …

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